The Unchanging God and Other Sermons

JOSEPH OWEN

6-28-54
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Geo Frigand & family
9-2-35

to Aunt Alice and Uncle
Henry.

Christmas 1935
With best wishes and love.

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THE UNCHANGING GOD

AND OTHER SERMONS

The Unchanging God

and Other Sermons

By

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Dedication

To mine and my wife's parents, who have given of their best to me, and who, in the increase of years, are proving the faithfulness of The Unchanging God.

FOREWORD

The messages found in this book do not belong to a regular series. They are, for the most part, selected from among the sermons preached in revival campaigns that have taken me well over our own nation and into the Dominion of Canada. With one or two exceptions, they have been dictated from notes in the midst of heavy administrative duties in a growing college. They, therefore, lack the literary finish, which greater leisure would have made possible. The style and language of extemporaneous address have been retained on purpose.

These themes will serve to show the staples of gospel emphasis in a ministry that has never desired to be any other than scriptural, evangelistic, pointed and passionate.

If they prove a blessing in their printed form, as we have reason to believe they have when spoken by the preacher, we shall be glad. We send them forth in His name, whose we are and whom we serve.

J. O.

John Fletcher College
University Park, Iowa.

INTRODUCTION

By John Paul

When it comes to appraising preachers and preaching, we must recognize that we live in a peculiar day. Wise indeed is that man, and strong as wise, who can ignore the varying currents and steer his boat straight to the port. No current represents a pull in a direction that is one hundred per cent safe. It may be easier to follow a school of thought that some one has standardized, but the author of these sermons has sought simply to be governed by the truth as it is in Jesus. He has consulted this compass of truth and pointed his boat toward the port, regardless of currents.

This preacher has not made a new discovery, nor has he become suddenly stirred with an ambition to rush into print with a revised edition of the gospel. He has tried to identify the old, old story and to clothe it in that fresh and vigorous imagery that belongs to his style, and give it the point and pungency which make for results. Some student in one of the lake cities once asked D. L. Moody if his gospel message was not rather old, about forty years behind the times. Mr. Moody replied that if the gospel he preached were not as old as the Garden of Eden he would throw it into Lake Michigan. "Who will write the new gospel for me?" exclaimed Gipsey Smith in a meeting at Cartersville, Georgia in 1913. Some one had said that a new gospel was needed for the world. "The one who writes it for me," said the Gipsey, "will have to die for it and then rise again."

It is true indeed that no new topic can improve on the gospel for drawing power. We need no new romance no flavored philosophy or free verse poetry in order to give the world something interesting. The gospel of Christ is the most interesting message in the world. Joseph Owen is a preacher of the gospel to the manor born. He has succeeded all over the nation, without saying any foolish things, and without the use of decorative fringes. The messages in this book are alive. Scores of souls have caught the new vision under their proclamation. They track the line of Scripture teaching and reflect the mind of Christ. They are devised in line with that most engaging program that was announced by the fathers at the birth of the American nation: "To evangelize the continent and to spread Scriptural holiness over these lands."

Taylor University,

Upland, Indiana.

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The Unchanging God

THE UNCHANGING GOD

TEXT. II Kings 2:14: *"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"*

Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah, was the successor of Elijah, the Tishbite, in the prophetic office. His appointment to such a mission was witnessed in several ways. Elijah came one day into the field where Elisha was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him and he with the twelfth. Passing by Elisha, the prophet cast his mantle upon him. Elisha understood that such a ceremony constituted a call to follow Elijah and running after him he asked that he might be permitted to return home and bid his father and mother farewell, promising that then he would follow him. Returning to his home, he took a yoke of oxen, slew them and boiling their flesh, gave to the people to eat, then went out to spiritual adventure with Elijah. That was his call.

Conservative Bible historians are of the opinion that some eight years intervened between the occurrence we have just noted and the translation of Elijah. During that time Elisha was almost wholly in the company of Elijah and under his tuition. He was in a very real sense in the school of the prophet. The impact of Elijah's personality was felt, the inspiration of his example became a part of the heritage of his young successor. We may very well call that Elisha's training.

A premonition of Elijah's translation seems to have gotten abroad. The sons of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho had tuned in on Heaven's broadcasting station and had alike gotten the message that Elijah's crowning was at hand. But to Elisha had been given the same message. As he journeyed with Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel and from Bethel to Jericho and from Jericho across the Jordan,

these sons of the prophets met him with the question. "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?"

Elisha's repeated answer was, "Yes, I know it. Hold ye your peace."

When Elijah saw the purpose of Elisha was fixed to abide with him until his translation, he said to him, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee," and Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

The import of that unusual request seems to be that it asks for the portion belonging to the first born of the family. Elisha was pleading that he be regarded as Elijah's first born son in the prophetic ministry, and that to him should be given the spiritual heritage belonging to the first born. When we remember that this request had no reference to earthly treasure, but was wholly spiritual in its content, we get something of its wealth of meaning. Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." That, as we interpret it, was the divine offer of spiritual equipment to Elisha for the ministry to which he had been called.

As Elijah and his successor walked and talked there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven. Elijah dropped his mantle back upon Elisha and Elisha picked it up, wrapped it about him, and started on his way back to the Jordan. That was the simple and yet sublime ordination of young Elisha for the prophetic office.

Our text finds Elisha on the banks of the Jordan after the impressive ceremony we have just reviewed, asking a question of great moment. The significance of the question may be found by remembering the circumstances

back of it, and the atmosphere in which it was asked. The question is not an inquiry propounded to man. It was solemnly addressed to God. It is not the wording of a lost sense of the fact of God's presence. Elisha is not inquiring the way back into the presence of a lost deity. I do not think there is here any expression of doubt, any announcement of distrust. It seems to me, rather, to be a plea that the first installment of his spiritual inheritance as the first born be given to him. He seems to be saying, "Wilt thou not bless the sons of the prophets as thou didst bless the prophets? Wilt thou not reveal thyself to the first born as thou didst to the father? Thou who didst divide the waters when Elijah smote them with this mantle, wilt thou not divide them again at the call of his successor? Art thou not the unchanging God?"

Our knowledge of God comes by revelation. When we undertake to bring Him down within the confines of formal definition, or even human comprehension, to use Bishop Quayle's striking phrase, we "ensmall" God. That is condemnation sufficient for the rather bold way men have of entering the sacred precincts of the life of Jesus and discussing dogmatically His spiritual consciousness and its development. Some of our leaders to-day are altogether too bold and too dogmatic in discussing that part of the life of our Lord that intervened between His temple visit in Jerusalem, when twelve years of age, and His baptism of John the Baptist. They say He was just a normal boy. What they forget to say is that if His were only a normal boyhood, that of all the rest of us has been either abnormal or sub-normal. He was not a fetish, performing miracles while a babe in Mary's arms, and carrying mountains on His shoulders in childhood. The Son of God respected the seasons of the soul and came to His great life mission only after the maturity of manhood was upon Him; but from His Virgin Birth to His Olivet ascension, His life had in it elements that transcend the ordinarily human. We may well gaze where the Scriptures do not reveal in reverence and speechless wonder.

In saying that our knowledge of God comes by revelation, we do not mean to imply that the revelations are such as to leave us in uncertainty concerning the attributes of Deity. We are saying only that these revelations are so great and transcendent as that they do not yield themselves to the definitions of men. On sufficient grounds, we know that God is holy, and just, and merciful, and good. We just as readily believe in His omnipotence, His wisdom and His unchanging nature. The God of Elijah was the God of Elisha. The God of Abraham and Isaac was the God of Jacob. The God of Sinai is the God of Bethlehem, Calvary and Pentecost. The God of Ante-diluvian judgments is the God before whom man shall stand in the day of final accounting. With the passing of dispensations there have come larger unfoldings of Deity. We never had a perfect revelation of God until He was incarnate in His son, who could say to Philip, and to men of all the succeeding generations, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

The notion of an unchanging God does not find ready acceptance in some quarters to-day. Along with a fully wrought theory of the evolution of man has come the belief by some of an evolving God. The God that H. G. Wells depicts in that widely discussed war book, "Mr. Brittling Sees It Through" was not the Jehovah of the Old Testament, nor the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was a struggling Deity, sometimes confused, often experimenting, and not very certain just how things were finally to come out. In no adequate sense did the author of that book conceive of God as possessing foreknowledge, or as being lifted above liability to err, or being endowed with omnipotent energy for executing His own sovereign will.

In our own day, they who talk of a changing God, of an evolving Deity predicate their argument on the well known law of nature that a thing which ceases to grow and develop shall immediately start toward decay and death. It has been clearly and faithfully pointed out by Christian apologists that the trouble with that argument

and the conclusions to which it brings us is that it lacks any dependable analogy. It is true, we have seen death begin its work wherever growth has been arrested, but our only illustrations have been taken from the partial and the imperfect. To apply the same laws to a perfect Creator which we apply to the imperfect creature is hardly a rational procedure. A changing God, subject to the caprices of time does not meet the demands of faith, nor offer to a sinful race in the emergencies of life hope and comfort and rest.

Passing through the door which this Old Testament inquiry opens for us, we seek prayerfully and reverently to find out something of the relations that the God of Elijah takes to man; nay more, to discover the attitude of the unchanging God toward our race. We are specially interested in some of the practical truths which such a quest brings to light.

1. God is unchanging in His militant attitude toward evil. That is very different from saying that He is the enemy of the sinner. He compasses the evil-doer about with ministries of mercy and calls him by a thousand voices to the refuge of the good: but He searches evil out. With His eyes He tracks the evil to the place of its hiding. He pledges His omnipotence in due time to the complete uprooting of sin in all the domains of the divine Kingdom. The wisdom of His planning, the energetic resources of grace, the destructive effects of His judgments are all arrayed against sin.

Two things are significant as we contemplate God's dealings with man in the present. Man is a free moral agent. He has been endowed with capacity for choice. God will not release his omnipotence for the destruction of such an agency. He will make available omnipotent power for the deliverance and protection of the soul that makes choice of the good; He will in His own time exert His omnipotence both to restrain and confine sin, but will never rob man of the freedom with which he was endowed. Then, man is serving out a day of probation. He is under moral

and spiritual test, as he moves toward maturity and fixedness of character and destiny, with all the possibilities flowing from either failure or success in meeting such a test boldly confronting him. The character God approves is not negative. It shall not consist of freedom from sin alone. Even the purity of the finally redeemed shall be a positive purity. The love of the citizens of the Eternal Kingdom shall be a demonstrated love, their devotion a proven and tested devotion. Because man is endowed with moral agency and because he is now on probation, God's judgments are not usually immediately poured out on wrong doing. While this is true in the main, God's Judgments are sufficiently numerous even now to reveal His inveterate hatred of sin.

It was so in Elijah's day. Ahab, Israel's ruling monarch, was one of the most wicked of all the successors of David. He not only compromised religious convictions in marrying Jezebel, daughter of the King of the Zidonians, but turned with her to idolatrous practices. Under his patronage, a temple for the worship of Baal was erected in Samaria. By the force of his example many were turned from the worship of the God of the fathers to the worship of Baal. It was on this account that God sent Elijah the Tishbite to minister stern rebuke. Meeting the sarcasm of the king, who charged Elijah with being Israel's troubler, Elijah flung in the teeth of Ahab an indictment for having become the disturber of Israel's peace, and the guilty source of the nation's wasting sorrows. It was the sin of the people that had brought drouth and the cry of woe in the land.

The truth is, the reformer, the missionary, the Gospel messenger are never the real sources of a nation's unrest. Evil and its advocates are the intruders on the peace of the world. It has been so in all the ages gone. It was sin that brought the break between the Creator and the created in the garden of man's innocency. Transgression destroyed fellowship, and disturbed the relations of the family of

God, effaced the image of the Divine in the heart of man, and brought on a conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman that shall never reach final decision until Jesus is crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

That was one of the truths taught by Jesus in the parable of the wheat and tares. The soil had been prepared and made ready for the reception of the seed. The owner of the field had gone out and sown wheat. Then an enemy came in and sowed tares. The mixed moral condition of the race which shall obtain even unto the end of the age was thus graphically pictured by the Son of God.

Our world is God's world. It was built as a home for peace and purity and love. It was the purpose of God that its fields should wave with a golden harvest of kindness, charity and good will. The seeds of anger, and avarice, and greed, and jealousy, and ill will have been sown by a foe. There are many who seem to take these things for granted; whose faith does not envision a day when they shall not be active forces in the relationships of man. It is not so with God. He bids us both to pray for and to expect the dawning of the day when there shall be a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness.

On this ground we believe the church of our Lord Jesus Christ has a right to plant the cross in every field of the world. There are those who say, "Why not let other nations alone with their own religions or lack of religions?" They ask why we should disturb the Brahman or the Buddhist as he reverently worships God in his own way. The world service of the church is not approached in that way by thoughtful men. Christians who have the world's salvation and welfare at heart go to non-Christian lands under the compulsion of love. They know full well that the one problem, in the presence of which every great religious leader of the world has been powerless, save Jesus alone, is the problem of sin. If it is merely a question of an ecclesiasticism, we can let India and China and Japan shape

their own. If it is a matter of expressing faith and devotion after racial tendencies, there need be no alarm. Why should we insist that there shall be a Western stamp placed on Eastern peoples? Why should we demand that Asiatic peoples accept Western civilization? They have civilizations of their own, hoary with age. There are some things, too, about our civilization they do well to reject. But when sin enslaves the people of China, impoverishes India's life and breaks the heart of Africa, the church of God has a right to protest. More, -vastly more, she is under command to raise a Christian army and to battle with Christian weaponry against this intruder on the premises of our God.

Against this invasion of evil, in the days of Elijah, God made protest and flung dynamic forces. There has been no reversal of attitude. God is no more friendly to sin today than in the ages gone. It seems to me perfectly reasonable that God deals with the generations on the basis of the spiritual light they possess and in harmony with the means He employs for their building. The progress of revelation has been from the outward to the inward, from the symbolic to the real, from the prophetic to the revealed. That which is but dimly forecast in the Old Testament is a glorious offer in the New Testament. The wonder of the Old Testament Scriptures lies largely in the prospects and prophecies which they contain. They who walk across the pages of the Old Testament as leaders and seers rebuke the sins of their day and become God's messengers to the ages to which they belong; but they have their faces toward the light. They are prophets of a coming dawn and a future Deliverer. The Old Testament promises are indices of what is coming. The promises of the New Testament are invitations to appropriate what has already been made available.

Those who compare the Old Testament Scriptures with the New Testament revelation to the disparagement of the former often do three things. First, they fail to distinguish

between the partial and the false. The most ardent conservative will readily admit that revelation has been progressive. There was first the dawn, then sunrise, and now we are moving toward the noon-day splendors of truth and revelation. The Sun of this day shall never set. Bishop Haygood of the M. E. Church, South, many decades ago gave forceful declaration to this truth, when he said; "The whole Christ is not in the prophets, He could not be, He had to be revealed to be known." Second, they forget the sweep of centuries that come under Old Testament review and as they contemplate the dispensations of judgment, record of which is found there, they forget the years of patient waiting and the seasons of divine solicitude and tender rebuke. It is along that way that men come to contrast what they conceive to be the attitude of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with that of the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Sometimes there is an utter disregard of the story of companionship told by Enoch, a forgetfulness of the abundant and tender mercies which the Psalmist celebrates, a disregard of the gentleness that makes great and of the pity that is offered even "as the father pitieth his children." Third, they ignore the judgment aspects in the teachings of Jesus. We may not gloss His withering rebukes of the self-centered, self-righteous scribes and pharisees. They were adjudged as whited sepulchres by the Teacher from Nazareth—out of which, in their opinion, nothing good could come. It was Jesus who gave the picture of nations assembled before an enthroned King, divided both on the basis of their spiritual condition and their service as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Those on the right were welcomed into the riches of a Kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world, and into a life that is eternal. Upon those on the left was pronounced a curse that carried with it a command to depart into "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." No thoughtful man would care to become imaginative or dogmatic in dealing with a passage of such solemn import, but, whatever this vocabulary of woe and despair may mean, it was spoken by Jesus

It was He who gave us the picture of the "fixed gulf" over which neither Lazarus who had found rest in Abraham's bosom, nor the rich man who asked for water to cool his tongue could pass. Jesus gives us the body of New Testament teaching on the retribution of the wicked and the horrors of hell. Intruding upon the tender intimacies and close fellowships of those last days before his passion were His heartbreak over Jerusalem and His solemn warning of impending doom. In fact, if the incarnate Son is the revelation of the Father in the wealth of His love and sympathy, He is the voice of the Father in His protest against sin. God is Christlike in His outpouring of wrath against evil just as surely as He is Christlike in His revelation of love toward men. We are in danger of forgetting that one of these truths is just as real as the other.

We arrive at the same convictions if we turn to nature for illustration. We are being told today that He who created still creates, that He who ordained nature's laws actively supports them: that God is a present force in the universe He has made. We see no reason why any Christian man should dissent from such statements. The voices of nature, however, unanimously support the proposition that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." It is so in the fields. It is so when applied to the bodies of men. It is true in the intellectual realm. The fact is, we must get above the purely natural to find any ground for the doctrine of forgiveness. There is no arresting of the law of gravity. There is no avoiding of the hurt if we get in the way of a moving body. The laws of nature are stern and unrelenting. There is a retributive thread running through the very warp and woof of things. We should never know that forgiveness is offered or purity a possibility did not the unchanging God bring such news to us.

The conclusion to which we must come, therefore, whatever may be our approach, is that God's attitude toward evil is unalterable. He opposes it; He condemns it;

He warns against it; He plans its destruction; He will, He must take action against the intentional evil-doer.

2. God is unchanging in His saving purpose toward His people. Let there be incorporated in the content of salvation all it means to be delivered from sin, then increase it with the thought of being kept in temptation, delivered in peril, and wrought upon for good by the providences of God. We are then in possession of the thought we would have you get. God wants to take the relation of Savior to man with all the obligations it imposes. The Scriptures indicate that the strongest motives belonging to God are those which have to do with His Fatherhood and Saviorhood. The obligations for man's rescue must not be lightly estimated. Infinite wisdom is back of the plan and purpose of redemption. It takes infinite power to effect man's deliverance. It is more than high sounding phrase, those words which declare,

> "*Twas great to speak the world from nought,*
> *'Twas greater to redeem.*"

If we are to infer from the teachings of the Scriptures, the new creation is more costly in divine toil than the old. Power was required to create man. It takes grace to recreate him. God spoke and it was done on creation's natal day but back of human redemption is the mystery and tragedy of a divine sacrifice.

It is this story of man's helplessness and the supernatural agencies involved in man's redemption which has stung the opponents of the religion of the Bible to such active opposition. Prompted by prejudices rather than by any intellectual or reasonable demands for such attitude, there are those in our day who would delete from the Scriptures everything that has upon it the stamp of the supernatural. They begin with the Old Testament but let the weight of their attack fall at last upon the New Testament as well. They give such easy and rational explanations

for some things that are presented in the word of God as miraculous and providential.

Take the account of the deliverance of the Children of Israel at the Red Sea. They tell us there was nothing unusual about that at all. There came a strong wind from the South which pushed back the waves of the Sea. It may have been a very cold wind and the waters thus piled up had a tendency to congeal. But they do not tell us how, according to the varying estimates of historians, from an half million to two millions of men, women and children could have traveled over the rough bed of the Sea in the face of a gale like that. And they do not tell us how it was that the wind ceased blowing just as the Children of Israel got over and the hosts of Pharaoh made ready to follow. If the waters were frozen, we wait for the explanation of the sudden thaw. Why this conspiracy of the accidental and the chance to the saving of Israel's multitudes and the destruction of Egypt's army? The truth is, that sort of an explanation is cheap and, in its effort to get past the supernatural, it betrays a weak defense of a poor cause. With some of us it is much more easy to accept the frank, unvarnished Scriptural accounts of God's intervention on behalf of man than the labored explanations men give of such accounts.

As we have intimated, the New Testament is finally dealt with after the same methods as the Old. An eastern professor is on record as having said that the beautiful and chaste account of the virgin birth was invented by Matthew and Luke to save Jesus from the seeming stigma of having been born out of wedlock. All the divine elements of the doctrine of the resurrection are evaporated by a modernistic touch that leaves the whole account but a jumble of meaningless words and phrases. We are told dogmatically that the singing and praying of Paul and Silas at the midnight hour in the Phillipian jail had no relation to the coming of the earthquake. Nor did the praying of the people effect anything for the deliverance

of Peter from the prison on that eventful night in old Jerusalem. How striking, how very striking this ministry of the "just-happen-so" across the ages!

Faith cries, "It is not so." The God of Elijah still lives and loves and protects His own. He who fed Elijah by the beak of ravens while the prophets of Baal were being entertained at the table of Jezebel, who revealed Himself after the rush of the storm, the destruction of flame, the shake of earthquake, in the "still small voice" is living today. We have comfort in the thought that we are not in a capricious universe. There is a reign of law which God himself has ordained. The seasons are not reversed. But we are just as sure that nature's uniformity is not more weighty with God than the laws of His own being. His love must find expression. His redemptive purpose must be revealed. His providential care must be thrown about the objects of His love. He can turn back the tide of the sea, bend light rays, raise up the sick, forgive the guilty, cleanse the unclean, keep the tempted and deliver the assailed. His saving purpose is just the same today.

3. God changes not in His attitude toward prayer. Perhaps the most convincing thing about Elijah's message to Ahab, that it should not rain by the space of three years and six months except at his word, was that it literally came true. James, the practical New Testament apostle, tells us that it rained not because Elijah prayed earnestly. He tells us also that Elijah prayed again, and the heavens gave a great rain.

Does God always answer prayer? Religious history replies in the affirmative. Ask the widow of Zaraphath whose meal was gone, and whose oil was wasted. Ask the prophet Daniel in the den of lions. Inquire of the Hebrew Children in the fiery furnace. Ask blind Bartimeus who hugged the path of the Master's going and cried his longing out despite the protests of the people. Ask the disciples who waited in consecration and faith and expectancy on

the first Pentecost. Ask Mary, Queen of Scots, to give her verdict when John Knox prays. Put the old world and the new on the witness stand when the early Methodists sang and prayed. Ask George Mueller of orphanage fame. We may not be able to deduct a philosophy of prayer out of the religious biography and history of the past, but we have a record of prayer success which becomes a priceless heritage to the church.

God changes not. We have prayer examples in the present which prove His unfailing willingness to give to him that asketh and to open to him that knocketh. Young men and women are finding it true in school life when finances are exhausted, and they know not which way to turn but to God in prayer. A mother found it true yesterday when her child was sick and the father was away from home. Wherever the church lifts her altars, wherever ardent souls wait in confession and contrition, prayer ascends to the throne of God and brings the answer down.

4. God changes not in that He still accepts the spiritual sacrifices men make. Elijah called the people of his day by heroic summons to test the gods who were bidding for their devotion. The challenge had the familiar wording, "If God be God, follow him: if Baal, follow him." He bade the people test their choice on the response of deity to sacrificial offering. He said, "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God."

Mount Carmel was named as the place of testing. The prophets of Baal and the priests of the Grove, a company eight hundred fifty strong, built an altar. They put upon the altar a sacrifice. They then lifted their voices in a chorus of petition ringing out in the ears of the people. "O Baal, hear us." He answered not in the morning. He was sleeping or he was "on a hunt" in the afternoon. The time of the evening sacrifice found the heathen deities without ears to hear and without hearts to pity the people who plaintively called upon them for help.

Elijah, the prophet of the lonely way, and sometimes of the discouraged soul, built up the broken down altar of God. He put his offering upon it. He commanded servants to bring water until twelve barrels of water had been poured upon the offering. Even the trenches about the altar were filled with water. He rescued himself from every charge of magic. He separated himself from every possible human assistance, and then, in the majesty of a great faith, cried "O God, let it be known that thou art God in Israel, and I am thy prophet." Fire leaped from Heaven's altar to Elijah's offering. The sacrifice was consumed. The water and the dust about the altar were licked up, and the people acknowledged the right of ownership and rulership over them of the God that answereth by fire.

Our times seem ripe for such a test as that. There are gods many lifted up for the attention of the people. Alien ways of divine approach are widely advocated. The conclusion of multitudes is that it makes no difference what you believe, and very little difference whom you serve. Yet the gods of many give no visions and answer no petitions. The sin problem is unsolved. The broken hearts of the people are without comfort. The great emergencies of life find the masses without spiritual help and support.

The general conditions of the world about us make such a revelation of the divine a crying necessity. Criminal statistics are appalling. Regard for law and order has well nigh passed in many circles. Unbelief swaggers about in the garments of a boasted intellectualism. The church is mocked with her failures, and in many instances is seeing the fountains of her generosity dried up. Her utter inability to meet the demands that are upon her in such an hour is fully established. We wait for the God that answereth by fire, for the God whose will is sovereign, who changeth not.

The sacrifice that gets the attention of Heaven must be real. The voice of prayer must be genuine and impleading. The soul's consecration must be entire and unreserv-

ed. God will answer, answer as in days of yore, answer by fire, answer with displays of divine power that shall convince the multitudes and turn them once again to the worship of the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

Refining fire, go through my heart
Illuminate my soul,
Scatter thy life through every part
And sanctify the whole.

Oh, that it now from Heaven might fall,
And all my sins consume,
Come, Holy Ghost, on Thee I call,
Spirit of Burning, come.

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

The Affirmations of Faith

THE AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH

Scripture References

2 Tim. 3:14-17 2 Peter 1:19-21 Hebrews 1:1-2

TEXT: *Lord, I believe.*—Mark 9:24.

And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.—John 6:69.

Jesus sought constantly to bring men to the attitude and exercise of faith. He was patient toward the pained and anxious inquirer after truth but rejoiced greatly in the expressions of confidence and trust which came to Him by the way. These were sometimes found in very unexpected quarters.

Twice in the gospel record are we told that Jesus marvelled. In both instances faith was an issue. After some days of busy ministry on both the eastern and western coasts of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus went down into His own country and among His own people. He entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath and taught the people. Those who heard Him said: "From whence has this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?" Then, they recovered from their wonder to remember His household and family relations and to ask: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Judah, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him." Jesus could do mighty work there. He spoke the sad, oft proven proverb: "A prophet is not without honor but in his own country and among his own kin, and in his own house." We are told, "He marvelled at their unbelief."

The second instance in which Christ is said to have marvelled was in the illustration of faith given by the Roman Centurion. He appealed to the Master on behalf of his servant "lying at home, sick of the palsy." Jesus said: "I will come and heal him." The centurion expressed a confidence in the ability of Christ to heal that did not rest in either His visible presence or His touch. He said: "But speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." When Jesus heard those words, He marvelled and said to those who followed Him, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Our day places too much premium on doubt. We owe a great deal to the inquirers after facts and to the discoverers of truth. The contribution of habitual doubters is not large in any field. Doubt is essentially a negative position and one never gets very far along the way of mere negations. Those who have meant most in the fields of the world as well as in the fields of faith have been those who have dreamed dreams, caught visions and, by believing, have received the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things which they have not been able to see. No great religious awakening has ever resulted from preaching a crusade of doubt. It is necessary to contend for the faith and to oppose error but even those things, when separated from a positive declaration of truth, will not awaken spiritual desire and move the souls of men Godward. The great need of the day, it seems to us, is for a positive, cogent, scriptural faith that brings the soul to assurance and establishes the believer in the fundamentals of the gospel.

The expressions of faith which make our text were called out by Jesus Himself. In both instances doubt was an easy possibility. In the case of the man with the possessed child, the disciples had failed to work a deliverance. It is a striking fact that the Lord traced the failure of the disciples to a lack of vital faith. Jesus spoke to the discouraged father and said: "If thou canst believe, all things

are possible to him that believeth." In response to that challenge to confidence, the man cried out, and said with tears: "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

With the disciples, on the other hand, it was an hour when their Lord and Master had seemed to lose prestige. Great multitudes had turned away from Him unable to receive His sayings. Jesus asked if they, too, as His followers, were ready to go away. Peter said there was no one to whom they could go for the words of eternal life and that besides, their faith had anchored them in the positive conviction that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Thus did these disciples arrive at the certitude and affirmation of faith in a time of real temptation to discouragement and doubt.

There are times when it is unreasonable to doubt. There are some things so important that to rest in uncertainty about them is inexcusable. There are some truths about which the Christian man or woman need not remain in unbelief. To do so is to turn aside from the heritage of the Christian believer. Prompted by the challenge to faith Christ gives, we purpose to inquire for some of the great fundamentals which are vital to the life of the Church in our day. We shall find that they were the pillars of faith in the yesterdays and that they shall be foundation stones of Christian belief for all the tomorrows.

The First Essential

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us that "he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." That is a necessary starting point. No spiritual quest shall take on large significance, whether it be that of unworded desire, or definite petition in prayer, that does not postulate the fact of God. For the established believer, the distinctively scriptural reasons for believing in such a fact are most satisfying. The evidences which support a belief in source, the majesty of its message, the moral agency of

the existence and superintendence of a personal God outside of those which are catalogued as doctrinal are impressive. We do not despise them.

Man is a rational being. To deny the validity of rational processes is to make all thought meaningless. We lead up blind alleys in every department of human investigation, if thought processes have no basis in reality and rational conclusions are not dependable. No progress can be made either in the discovery of physical laws or in finding out the method of their operation if we are not to depend upon deductions reached by rational procedure and based upon knowable facts. That is but another way of saying that it takes mind to understand the laws of the universe. If it requires mind to understand or in any sense explain the cosmos, we are logical in concluding that there is back of the universe an infinite Mind who planned it and ordained its laws.

We discover in nature an intelligible order. The various parts of the material universe are so interrelated and adjusted as that we infer a system. Common illustration may be found. Men without scientific training are aware of what Dr. R. W. Dale called the confederacy of the rain, the dew, the sun and the soil in calling forth the life of the seed and ripening it for the harvest. Not more sensible are we of the adjustment of the various parts of an engine or any other machine than we are of the correlation and orderly functioning of the laws of nature toward definite ends. Does the intelligible order of the engine imply intelligence back of its building? Does not the intelligible orderliness of the universe convincingly imply intelligence back of the universe?

We are still impressed with the weight of the old argument from design. There are those who tell us, however, that instead of a Creator giving man eyes in order that he may behold the beauties of nature and ears in order that he may hear the voices that command and charm him, the

possession of these facultites but argue the successful reaction of a sensitive organism to outward environment. It may be answered that if the law of cause and effect is to stand, there must be a sufficient cause for every effect. The vast forces of nature must have back of them a Creator omnipotent in energy. It takes mind to explain mind. Only the God of Revelation can become a sufficient explanation for the spiritual longings and nature of man; his sense of dependence, the impulse to worship, the cry for fellowship, the longing for moral purity.

Except to those who demand formal argument, one of the strongest grounds for belief in God is the great traditional heritage of such a faith. From the beginnings of human history men have believed in God and have sought after Him, if happily they might find Him. This has been true of the best of men in the seasons of their highest and holiest aspirations. It has been true of men in the most fruitful periods of history. It may not be dismissed as a superstition not yet outgrown but which at last is to be left behind. There is something back of such a faith that is primal and fundamental. Comprehension of God is not intuitive but a seeking after God and a longing for fellowship with the Eternal are normal to the soul. We may no more ignore and pass by these fundamental facts than we can ignore other facts with which human history makes us familiar.

When we pass from the inferential and speculative over into the realm of the revealed and experiential, we seem to be in another clime. We are conscious immediately of its radiance; of its warmth and glow.. Here that is not first which is intellectual but that which is spiritual. Knowledge of God through experience becomes more convincing than logical deductions. To the eyes of faith, "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handy work." And, "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-

head." "In Him, we move and have our being." He is not afar off, but with us and in us. He is

"Nearer to us than breathing
And closer than hands and feet."

God is transcendant but He is also imminent. He sitteth upon the throne of the eternities but He makes the hearts of the lowly His home. He is interested in the affairs of men. He is not the absentee God of the deist nor the mere impersonal force of the pantheist. Greater than nature and separate from nature, He nevertheless works through it. Higher than man in His thoughts, as the heavens are higher than the earth, He still holds converse with man and makes Him the subject of redeeming revelations. He is friendly and merciful, and kind. He knows our frailties. He remembers that we are dust. He pities as a Father. He calls in tenderness. His own arm brings salvation.

"Our very frailty brings us near
Unto the Lord of heaven;
To every grief, to every tear,
Such glory strange is given.

But not this fleshly robe alone
Shall link us, Lord, to Thee:
Not only in the tear and groan
Shall the dear kindred be.

Our own will be Thy Life Divine,
Thine image we shall bear;
With Thine own glory we shall shine,
In Thine own bliss shall share."

Four Corner Stones

The step is easily taken from the thought of a God thus engaged on man's behalf to that of a great moral purpose lying back of God's dealings with men. Whatever

He wills, plans, or does is in keeping with that purpose. The revelations He makes, by whatever agencies He employs; the disclosures of His own nature and the provisions for man's spiritual renewal and building are all in harmony with this moral and ethical intent.

There are four great fundamentals that are so inclusive as to imply, if they do not actually embrace, all others. They are: A Supernatural Revelation, A Divine Incarnation, A Sacrificial Redemption and Salvation by Faith.

1. One of the most hopeful signs of our day is that sober scholarship is turning to the Bible in quest of its own internal witness. What has the Bible to say for itself? What are the sources of authority to which its messages are attributed? Much of the destructive criticism of the Scriptures in recent decades has been based on what we may very well call collateral evidence. Witnesses have been called in who have a philosophy of history founded on an evolutionary hypothesis. Their testimony has been received with much acclaim and they have been given a long day in court. The Bible has not been given sufficient time for defense testimony. When that opportunity is offered the Scriptures shall speak in that atmosphere of God-awareness which their own supernatural origin creates and with an authority that is inherent. Sketched by the hand of prophet and apostle there shall appear, there does appear, the radiant likeness of Him who is the hope of prophetic seer and the center of apostolic faith and devotion. The scriptures, when searched, are found to testify of Him who is Son of God and Son of Man.

The Bible does not define inspiration; it presupposes it. "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" is the credential with which it asks for a hearing. Perhaps, the fact of inspiration is of larger content than all our conceptions of its method. The wisdom of God has dictated the factors that give to the Bible its appeal to the minds and hearts of men. The divinity of the Bible's

those to whom the message is sent, the capacities of men for receiving, and acting upon, the revelation given—all these must have been in the thought of God as He commissioned the Book to the court of man's thought and conscience. The channels through which many of the truths of this holy revelation were sent were richly and warmly human. There is individuality in the messages of Jeremiah and Amos and Hosea. We speak of Pauline and Johanine characteristics in the epistles which bear their names. They were more than amanuenses. But the truths they uttered were God-breathed and God-sent. They spake under a divine urge. They were conscious that the messages they declared were not their own. They claimed for them more than human authority. Whatever may have been the human accent of this revelation of truth coming to us through men who were like unto their brethren, God has controlled both the agencies and the results or destiny of the inspired word.

The Bible is not only the Word of God, it is supremely the Book of man. The classic utterance of Coleridge, "The Bible finds me," has been proven true among all races and conditions of men. It finds men in the depths: it beckons men to the heights. The language of the Scriptures has become the language of human longing and faith and daring. Is there a passion for righteousness? The Old Testament prophets word it. Are we suffering the visitation of unexplained afflictions? Job declares both the mystery of it and the faith necessary to bring one triumphantly through it. The language of the Psalmist fits easily into the moods of the soul when it is wont to express contrition, or longing, or gratitude, or security, or joy. Multitudes have found the words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," gloriously true. A thousand thousand have found surcease from sorrow when they have listened to the familiar passage, "Let not your heart be troubled." Crusades have drawn their inspiration and motive from New Testament epistles.

A thing must have life to give life. The Bible has been life-giving and life-supporting wherever its message has been received. The church has never been shamed by the standards the Bible supports. She has sometimes been shamed by the imperfect way in which she herself has lived out its teachings. That we are not as good as our Book has been true wherever messengers have gone to tell the story of a redeeming Lord. Blessed, blessed Book; the guide of youth; the light of life in its maturity and in the multiplicity of its cares; the comfort and support of age; the weapon of the Christian soldier in defense; the chart and compass of the sailor on life's tempestuous sea; the bread of life to the hungry soul; the water of life to thirsty multitudes. Our day needs a faithful proclamation of its truths; a confident dependence upon its conquering message. Against it, unbelief has raged impotently. The tools of doubt have fallen battered and broken from the hands of its foes. As the anvil the poet pictured wore the hammers that fell "blow on blow," so the Bible has withstood all the attacks of its enemies and left their weapons in broken fragments at their feet. It will abide the conflict of the ages. It is immortal because the Spirit who inspired it is eternal.

2 The incarnation is one of the profoundest truths of the Christian revelation. The Scriptures imply both a subjective and objective necessity for it from the divine side. The apostle in writing to the Hebrews says that Jesus was made "like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." There is no more tender revelation than that. The Lord seeks and finds a basis of sympathy and complete identification with man in a community of experience. In no way could the moral earnestness of God for man's rescue have been more forcefully declared. Love has shown the fullest measure of devotion by coming into a fellowship of temptation and suffering with the object loved. Jesus is acquainted with man's problems and knows how to sympa-

thize with him in his spiritual conflicts because He has traveled in man's pathway and met his foes. That is the wealth of the incarnation. It brings God down into touch and comradeship with a race. It makes Him the understanding, sympathetic sharer of humanity's loads.

Then, God wanted that men should know His heart of Fatherhood. We may see illustrations of His power and wisdom in the physical universe, but we see Him in the riches of His love as Jesus teaches His children to say, "Our Father," and as He goes about doing good. The name of Father is large enough in content to include all the other offices the Lord fills in relation to men. Whether He is dealing with us as Creator, Master, Redeemer, or Judge, He is never removed from the motives of Fatherhood. And the meaning of Fatherhood was shown by Jesus the Son. We see the Father's face in His face. We hear the Father's voice in His voice. We feel the Father's touch in the touch of His hand on ours.

The necessity for the incarnation from the standpoint of the human is a truth too large for review here. Jesus in His person revealed manhood at its best. There is not a wrong practice that His life did not reprove. There is not an evil trait within that His character did not rebuke. Jesus by His sacrifice satisfies the innate sense of need for sacrifice felt by every guilty soul. Jesus by His promises inspires faith and we hold deity in the embrace of heart confidence. He became in the incarnation Immanuel. God with us.

We do well to remember that the incarnation is the great inclusive mystery. Let men accept that fact and there will be little quibbling over some other things which support the fact. One cannot accept the New Testament teaching on the incarnation and doubt the preexistence of Jesus. The virgin birth is no longer stumbled over as a "biological miracle" in the presence of this mystery. Much of the current discussion on the virgin birth seems to proceed on the

assumption that the one problem is that of getting the Son of God into the world. The Scriptures present this as only one link in the chain of supernatural facts belonging to the incarnation. It is a necessary link, if we are to hold inviolate the New Testament conception of His person.

If a man were dying and I were called to minister spiritual comfort, I would not enter into a doctrinal discussion of the virgin birth. The faith for which I would appeal at such an hour would, nevertheless, imply all that the virgin birth supports with reference to the person of Jesus. That truth is a necessity for the faith of the church It marks the first great, effective step in the redemptive effort.

3 The fact of the atonement is of larger moment than theories of the atonement. There are certain essential meanings belonging to the great fact itself. It was prompted by love. There were barriers in the nature of God which made man's recovery without sacrifice an impossibility. Those barriers were present with the Son as surely as with the Father. The atonement was vicarious, sacrificial, redemptive. It engaged every person of the adorable Trinity. The Father so loved that He gave His only begotten Son. Jesus gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity. Jesus offered Himself without spot unto God through the Eternal Spirit.

Perhaps, every theory which has commanded the sanction of any large number in the church has some vital truth in it. No theory contains all the truth. We can overwork the substitutionary theory until the agency of man in accepting the provisions of grace is largely done away. The govermental theory may be so stressed as to exalt the justice and righteousness of God to the disparagement of His love and mercy. The moral suasion theory may be so accented as to take away the vicarious element in the suffering of Jesus. Of course, in no large area of the church is redemption being considered simply as a com-

mercial transaction. We would not take away from the fact of sacrificial redemption any of these great essential truths which combine to make it the sublime Christian fundamental that is. Christ died for me. That is substitution. He met the demands of God's law. That is governmental. Such wondrous love as that breaks my heart and demands in return my life, my love, my all. That is moral compulsion. And, yet, there is vastly more in the prompting love of the Father, in the self-giving of the Son, in the sacrificial assistance of the Holy Spirit than that. Truth is bigger than its mould. Life every where overflows its processes. Love is fuller than its definitions. Redemption is a truth infinitely richer than the language of man can declare.

The atonement is central in Scripture emphasis. Much of the Old Testament is without meaning if its types and shadows do not point to and make preparation for the Sacrifice made by the Lamb of God. They have their complete fulfillment in Him and are thus shown to be prophetic.

Jesus made known to confused disciples at the last supper before His crucifixion that the bread was symbolic of His broken body and the wine emblematic of His blood. This ordinance so revered in the church we are commanded to keep in remembrance of Him. By it we do show forth the Lord's death till He come again.

The apostles join in making redemption central and foundational. Paul the apostle to the Gentiles and the great theologian of the New Testament said, "Christ died for our sins according to the gospel." Peter spoke of "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." John, in Patmos vision caught sight of a multitude that no man could number who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb of God is the center of heaven's attraction. Redemption is the chorus the church of the first born shall sing. And

strange as it may seem, we are told that there is no need of sun or moon in that city but the Lamb is its light. In that city where a knowledge and apprehension of God make it one of fadeless day, our redeeming Lord becomes the Orb of that day.

No imperfect and partial statement of the truth of the atonement, no reaction against the limitation of theories men have held must cause us to neglect this great Christian fact. We may not do so and meet the New Testament requirement of what it really means to be Christian. We cannot do so and arrest the attention of earth's multitudes to our message. The story of the divine sacrifice fits into the very scheme of human suffering and sin and longing. Men's hearts are made tender by the chaste and beautiful story of Jesus' birth. They are moved to gratitude and wonder at the record of His unselfish ministry. They are conquered at the Cross. The nations of the earth will not be won by presenting Him as the world's greatest teacher and hero. China and India and other nations have had their own heroic leaders. The people shall not be rallied to the silken ensign of a mere humanitarianism. They need a Savior. The banner of the Cross is the only banner under which the church can possibly march to world conquest. The motives that are inspired by the cross are the only motives that can support a missionary spirit, sustain a missionary morale or challenge young life to the sacrifice demanded of a missionary ministry.

4. The offer of Jesus as Savior implies His resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the divine majesty, and His ministry of intercession. He saves to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him because He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Man needs salvation. That implies his sinfulness. Without a Savior his case is hopeless. That argues his peril.

Since salvation is by faith, it becomes as universal as the exercise and use of the faith faculty. The fullness of

salvation awaits only on the fullness of faith's appropriation. It does not depend upon intellectual acumen or social standing. It lends no support to race pride or class exclusiveness. Whosoever believeth may have life. It vindicates the goodness of God in that there is life for this look of faith at the Crucified One. It locates responsibility for final rejection of salvation with man, in that he has not simply ignored an arbitrary command but has wronged his own soul in refusing to employ one of its highest faculties. Salvation by faith exalts the grace of God, wipes out all the superficial distinctions that have been erected by men in support of race or cast and promises a brotherhood in Christ Jesus whose law is love and whose inheritance is peace. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast; but we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

The Victory that Overcometh

The church has always triumphed by the might and regnancy of her faith. Had there been any question in the minds of the early disciples as to the deity, the resurrection, the Lordship of Jesus, there had been no day of Pentecost. Devout people out of every nation would not have heard the gospel in their own tongue and been so pricked to the heart as that they would cry out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?"

Paul the apostle would never have caught the missionary vision nor gone out to evangelize the people of Asia Minor, nor the inhabitants of the cultured city of Athens nor the citizens of imperial Rome, had there been any question in his mind about the great essentials.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is faith that inspires us to plan for the world's spiritual conquest. It is faith that makes the fountains of

generosity flow. It is faith that dares the perils of the sea, lifts its voice in the midst of hoary civilizations and over against the world's need, its superstition and sin builds an altar to the *known* God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of men.

The church of tomorrow shall conquer as the church of yesterday by the dynamic of a positive faith. To the facts of faith, the demands of faith, and for the good fight of faith we would offer ourselves anew in heart loyalty.

Facing the Sin Problem

FACING THE SIN PROBLEM

TEXT: *"My Sin is ever before me."* PSA. 51:3.

It has been well said that no one goes very far astray on the sin question who honestly examines his own heart. We may in the seclusion of a study or in the interest of a theological theory have notions that are far from true if judged either by the Scriptures or human experience. This is not true of the passage we have selected for our text. These words were spoken by the Psalmist David. They leap to expression out of deep heart consciousness. They do not belong to the field of controversy. They were not written in defense of stubbornly held doctrinal views.

King David had looked with lustful eye on Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. In the exercise of the unlimited authority which belonged to monarchs in those days he violated the sanctity of Uriah's home and robbed Bathsheba of her sense of perfect loyalty and faithfulness to her husband. No scheme for hiding his crime seemed to avail. In desperation lest he should be found out David sent word to his captain of war who was besieging Rabbath, ordering him to locate Uriah where danger was greatest in the battle line and then have him deserted by his fellows in arms. In that way he hoped to make the death of Uriah certain. This unholy plan having been sucessfully carried out, the King brought Bathsheba to the palace as his own wife.

The Lord was greatly displeased with David and sent Nathan the prophet to offer rebuke. So effective was the censure the prophet administered that the Psalmist cried out in deep penitence and bitterness of soul for deliverance. Thus over the way of conscious and humiliating experience did Israel's poet-king come to a conception of sin that may well engage our thought.

Sin is Racial

Sin has what we may term its racial relations. That is the significance of the Psalmist's declaration, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." He was not saying that he was born out of wedlock. There is here no bitter complaint that he is the offspring of illicit desire and sensuality. A study of the history belonging to the family of Jesse suggests that they were quiet and virtuous people. David was the youngest of a considerable family of boys. His coming into the world was not marked by a plunging of his mother into immoral practices thus late in life. That is not what is meant here.

Nor do we understand this passage to mean that David was born a guilty sinner. The old notion that Adam's guilt was transferred to his posterity and that because of this every son and daughter of the race is born with a guilt upon them that would close the door of heaven in their faces cannot bear either the light of reason or the Scriptures. Guilt is not transferable. The fact that a man has committed murder does not make all his children guilty of murder. In the world about us there may belong to children and even to whole families a sort of isolation resulting from the wrong doing of a father or mother. That is cold enough and wrong enough. We do not credit such families with the guilt of parental action.

What then, do we understand the Psalmist to mean? Let me see if I can find an illustration in the physical realm. Not one of us was born with a perfect body. There are outward blemishes and defects. Even when we speak of physical soundness we are using comparative language. But whatever may be true of our profession of bodily health today, there are physical tendencies within us and physical laws operating upon us that prophesy certain physical collapse and death unless arrested by a power higher than that belonging to man. Paul talked about the possibility of such an arrest of these forces when speaking of death. He

said; "We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed." With death dealing germs on the outside and the very law of physical decay working on the inside of our bodies, if the Lord Christ come not soon in second advent glory we shall all sleep the sleep of death.

Bring that truth over into the realm of the spiritual. There is a moral bias for which we are not immediately responsible, a heart inclination to evil for which we are not in any sense guilty at birth that must be arrested and remedied by the grace of God, else it shall incline the soul to death. The theologians call it human depravity. Our doctrinal statements of this fact are fragmentary and partial, our philosophies of it are altogether unsatisfactory, but about the fact of it there is no room for reasonable question. It is this depravity of nature that causes a child to rave at parental authority. This condition of heart, too, causes young people to complain at even reasonable and necessary restraint in school circles. It is this which causes members of the church to chafe under disciplinary restrictions. The truth is, withdraw the religious forces in any community, remove the restraints of grace, and there would immediately follow such a lowering of moral standards as would sicken the heart.

A well known preacher said in my hearing when I was a college student that it was not because man was so bad that Jesus died, but because man was so good. That is not even a respectable half-truth. In the love of God man was infinitely treasured. Human worth was measured by the sacrifice a Heavenly Father made for man. But Jesus did not die because of our goodness. His death was sacrificial and redemptive. The wisdom of God could find no other way for the rescue of man from his sin and rebellion than the way of the cross. The rejection of Jesus by man was not an expression of his goodness, but of his innate perversity. Men crucified the Lord of Glory because of spiritual blindness. Bishop Wm. Quayle was wont to call attention to the fact that there is a difference between being sinful, and being a sinner. The one has reference to condition; the other

to action. We were born sinful; we were not born sinners. We were *not* born guilty; we *were* born with this racial taint of depravity upon us. Our hope for the safety of the world of men is, therefore, not in evolution and cultural processes, but in the Grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Personalness of Sin

The Psalmist takes a step further than the recognition of the racial aspects of sin. Light has come upon the path of his going. He has been brought under a higher law than that of innate tendency. He has heard a voice more authoritative than that of his own perverse nature. In addition he is sensibly aware that assistance from above has been offered him in order that he may respond to the divine demand. Though the grace of God has its fullest revelation in the New Testament, it was the most vital factor in the transformations of life which came to Old Testament worthies. King David had been specially favored by Jehovah. His life had been providentially ordered and he held his position as ruler over Israel by divine ordination. The sin which now so darkened his record was committed in forgetfulness of the divine faithfulness. He has ignored the call of God and resisted the strivings of his own conscience. The revelations which are his have enabled him to clearly discern the condition of nature out of which lust sprang and to pungently feel the guilt which lust indulged inevitably brings. Such revelations served also to locate with the king the sense of complete ownership both of the act guiltily perpetrated, with the crime committed to hide it, and the depraved heart state back of such acts and prompting to them.

Deep heart crises are often effective corrections of an unsound theology. If we are to regard the first chapters of the Book of Isaiah as chronological and the message given there as having been spoken before the prophet's tem-

ple vision, we must conclude that Isaiah had some rather positive convictions on the sin question. A "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters" are not soft terms. The condition of the people who had been stricken with the judgments of God was pictured boldly and graphically. However, the vision of God which came to the prophet of Uzziah's Court as he waited in temple worship, went deeper than the throwing of light on the social injustices of a nation and the wrong doing of the people in mass. In the white light of that revelation, sin was discovered as a malady attacking the moral nature of man. Its outward manifestation was seen in a pollution that soiled the lips of both prophet and people. The deep consciousness of it provoked the cry: "I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." That vision, with its contrast of the holiness of God with the unrighteousness of man, saved Isaiah from any unworthy conceptions of the divine holiness and from all dependence upon the self righteousness of men.

It was along the same path essentially that David came. Guilt, the deep-dyed guilt of social corruption and immorality, the guilt belonging to an artfully planned and skilfully accomplished murder, had found him out. It led him to some spiritual discoveries he had not made before. In self-examination, he went deeper than an inquiry into the just deserts of his wrong doing would have taken him. He honestly searched his very soul, willingly finding out the alien and unholy tendencies belonging there. Sin, both as guilty practice and unholy condition, became personal. Wrong doing became his by deliberate planning and intentional execution. Depravity of nature became his by harboring it and knowingly yielding to it. It was a searching hour; a time of alarm and fear. The presence of God seemed about to be withdrawn. The Psalmist was left in loneliness of soul, conscious that the whole murderous

plot was a child of his own heart. We do not wonder that he cried out: "My sin is ever before me."

It is a far look when we gaze across the centuries at Israel's singing monarch in penitence and tears. There is room for the same sort of an experience here and now. The light of truth, the call of God, definite conviction upon the soul, will suffice to make us owners of the darkest things in our natures. Let me turn to simplest and easiest illustration. We say in some hour of deep humiliation and defeat perchance: "My trouble is an impetuous temper. I recognize that I indulge sinful anger and say things that bring deep regret. I have need of victory over that condition." In the words I have just recited there is recognition of the presence of sinful anger and acknowledgment of need for deliverance from it. Hear the Word of God: "My God is able to make all grace abound toward you." That is, He can make every grace which your heart condition requires not only available but to abound. In the light of that glorious promise, following the definite conviction we have noted, that unholy temper becomes your property or mine. It may not now be charged to a father who lacked self control or to an impetuous mother. That dynamite becomes our very own and we ourselves become responsible for the damage its explosion may cause.

One of Nathaniel Hawthorne's shorter stories is entitled, "The Minister's Black Veil." He recites how a minister, a pastor in a certain church, appeared in his pulpit on a Sabbath day with a black veil over his face and then went out and in before his people never to have that veil removed from his face in the presence of men. After the consternation attending such an act had passed the people settled down to questioning among themselves as to the significance of the veil, whether it was symbolic of the desire to hide his own sins or the sins of the people. Whatever the explanation, the minister seemed to be proprietor over some secret that he kept hidden, symbolically at least, by the veil.

Under the illumination of the Spirit of God and the authoritative call of God to the soul we become proprietors not only of our actions but the uncleanness of our natures as well. Our selfishness, our worldliness, our pride, our uncharitable judgments, our covetousness, our whole carnal selfhood become guiltily our own. Happy the man who in the midst of revelations so dark, cries out, "My sin is ever before me." The next step of a soul like that is into the cleansing fountain.

Sin is Pre-eminently Opposition to God

There are few passages in the Word of God that have been more puzzling to the ordinary reader than the one in this Psalm, which says: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." We quickly inquire does David mean to say he has not wronged anyone but God in committing both adultery and murder? I may not be able to satisfy your thought but it seems to me that this expression of the Psalmist has both its surface meaning and its deep foundation explanation.

David was king over Israel. As a monarch his powers were absolute over the people he governed. He was immune to the law. We have no perfect illustration of David's position in the officiary of our country. There is a certain immunity enjoyed by the President of the United States, but he may be impeached for cause. Senators and Congressmen enjoy immunites that the private citizen does not have. That is a reason why some of them at times say such scathing things about other people. Sometimes I feel that if they did not have these rights they might talk less and say more. But there were no limitations of law placed on the conduct of Israel's monarch. He could order Uriah where he would have him go. By wicked ingenuity he could take Bathsheba for a wife if he chose to do so. There was no one to dispute his right. In that sense of responsibility David had sinned only against God. That is the surface meaning.

There is a deeper, more fundamental content. Uriah had been sinned against and grievously. Bathsheba had been wronged, deeply wronged. Even the people who had a right to expect in their ruler an example of moral uprightness had been sinned against in this open and overt act of the king. But pre-eminently was this sin an affront to God. He alone had perfect right to be angry with it. Phillips Brooks said, "One great evil of the sin we are full of is that it takes away our right to be indignant when other people sin, and so in time our standard of thought is lowered to their scale." Jesus was making this truth authoritative when the scribes brought the adulterous woman into his presence and said she ought to be stoned. Jesus answered, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." Let him that has no haunting memory of wrong doing, that has never carried the load of personal guilt, that feels no kinship of conduct even with a poor dissolute fallen woman, cast the first stone. We do not wonder that they went out one by one while the Master wrote unrecorded words in the sand. So would we have done.

I may not be complimentary. It is hardly expected I shall be in the presence of facts. Many of us have felt that in the midst of the unholy clamorings within and under strong outward temptation capable of committing sins we would shudder to name and most of us have been guilty of things we would not tell from the housetops for any amount of money. That is it! That is it! Our kinship with a race in its sin takes away our right to sit in judgment upon it. Only by turning from sin have we right to protest against it. Only when we hate it with a great hatred are we lifted into any right to condemn it. Only the the perfectly holy God is capable of sitting in judgment on the final effects and deserts of sin.

Then again. God receives unto his own heart the greatest agony sin brings. He presides over the race in the relation of a Father. The burdens and losses and wrongs which come to men grieve Him.

A well known writer in one of his later books tells the story of a little girl who was taken from a home of culture and wealth by a Mexican bandit and his wife. She was in turn rescued in the west by two old miners who had no families. They gave her the best home they could provide and lavishly spent what they could come into possession of in order to give to her an opportunity for education. They entered into a partnership parenthood and she called one father one week and the other father the next week. There was much community comment as the girl grew from babyhood to childhood and from childhood toward womanhood. The eye of suspicion was often leveled at her, the tongue of the tattler and the libeler often wagged. These sturdy men of the mines kept ceaseless vigil over her welfare and served out their assumed parenthood partnership under the impulses of deep devotion and a rugged virtue. That young woman came to an hour when her name was untarnished and when she faced life with a splendid young man unashamed. But imagine what must have been the agony in the hearts of that father and mother out of whose home the little girl had been taken to an uncertain destiny.

That but faintly suggests the grief of God for man's venture in sin. He suffers over the race that has gone astray. He goes out to seek the one lost sheep. He waits in tender compassion to forgive the prodigal son who has journeyed so far away and come to such dire need. Greater than the agony which the children of Uriah knew for the loss of the father was the agony in the heart of God over the deed of the king which had brought Uriah's death. More deeply grieved than Bathsheba was in the presence of her shame or in the loss of what all the Scripture evidence goes to show was a noble and heroic husband was the grief of God in the presence of David's lust and in his foul plan for the taking of a life that his sin might not be found out. I am trying to say, by illustrations that do not perfectly illustrate that the holiness of God. His absolute

holiness, gives Him perfect right to be angry with sin and that His fathomless love for man brings to His own heart an agony in the presence of sin that no mere man can possibly know. And because of these profound spiritual facts our sin is pre-eminently against God.

A Sinner's Portrait

And now if we will stand nearby the Psalmist will paint on Scripture canvas the portrait of a sinner. With deft hand he brings out the character features of himself in sin and in doing so pictures every other soul living in sin. The sinner is guilty. "Have mercy upon me. Blot out my transgressions. I acknowledge my transgressions." What confessions of guilt, nay what fact of guilt! I was in a city at the north when a prominent man was being tried for the wrong use of money. The trial had been long and tedious. The evidence had been voluminous both for and against the accused. Pleas of lawyers were shrewd and eloquent. The charge of the judge was technical and full. After some time of deliberation the jury brought in a verdict of guilty. One of the daily papers carried the man's picture. There was the look of dejection in his face. His shoulders were stooped as though heavy burdens were resting there. He had a downcast look. His countenance showed deep evidence of sorrow. Underneath the picture was just one word, "Guilty." Men may toss their heads and put on appearance but underneath the portrait of every wrong doer may be written in letters of fire: "Guilty."

The Psalmist does not stop there. He locates in this character portrait the hidings of uncleanness. Listen to his wording of the sense of uncleanness, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create within me a clean heart." What is he saying? He is saying that just as in the days of old, men became unclean ceremonially by coming in contact with that which was ceremonially impure, so now is he soiled within and unholy within. The great God must

purge with hyssop. The Mighty One to save must wash and make whiter than the driven snow.

He pictures the sinner as having lost kingliness of soul. We are told by some who examine the pasasge critically that the petition in the 10th verse which reads: "Renew a right spirit within me," is literally "Renew a kingly spirit within me." David sat upon a material throne and judged in the presence of the people, but his soul had been spiritually dethroned and was down a back alley in filth and dirt. Physically he lived in a palace, spiritually he lived in a hovel with poverty and squalor. Politically he was a king, spiritually he was a slave, poor, abject, helpless.

How true in our own day. Men are physically athletic, their souls are emaciated and dwarfed and crippled. Their bodies are garbed according to the latest dictates of fashion, their souls are in tatters and rags. They have flowers upon their bosoms and at their lapels, there is crepe on the door of the soul. We may be lifted to places of power by the franchise of men, good and bad. We shall come to spiritual power only by the imperialism of holy character. I call you this hour to spiritual emancipation in the forgiving grace of God and to kingliness of soul in the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A People Without a Past

A PEOPLE WITHOUT A PAST.

TEXT: I PETER 2:10: *"Which in time past were not a people but are now the people of God."*

It is worth while to have a past. It is absolutely necessary to have a present and a future. With a good many people the most important question is, who were your ancestors and what is your pedigree? The meaning of heredity is not to be ignored. Paul was reciting the worth of a good heritage when he said to Timothy, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in thee also."

We are dealing with a deeper law than that which has to do with family, or with kingly, or apostolic succession. The devotion of parents will not make secure the child who both purposes and practices wrong. Even in Old Testament times when a son had been lifted to the throne of his father, if he sinned, the God of Israel withdrew the blessings which had been given to the father. No church generation can live on the experiences given to the generation preceding it. We are *not* in apostolic succession because we have been baptized after some particular mode or ordained by one who is supposedly a link in an unbroken church chain from the days of the apostles. We are only in apostolic succession when we contend for the same faith, experience the same grace, serve in the same ardor and accomplish the same essential mission as did the apostles. Apostolic succession is to be traced in spiritual kinship rather than in external conformity.

The truth is, the God who presides over the lives and destinies of men pays very little attention to the notions of men as to what the past of His trusted servants shall be. Some one has said that it is but three generations

from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves. One generation toils and saves. The next generation is idle and extravagant. The third generation goes back to shirt-sleeves and sweat-shops. How often the sons and daughters of unknown parents come to leadership among their fellows. How many times, too, the children of illustrious parents fail to maintain the great record of those who have gone before.

We cannot say that there is anything in this which particularly displeases us. It would be monotonous if in the church we had to say "Bishop So-and-so, whose father was Bishop So-and-so, whose grandfather was Bishop So-and-so" We thoroughly believe in a democracy of opportunity and feel that leadership ought to be given to those whose talents, training and devotion merit such distinction.

Our text calls upon us to consider a people who had no spiritual past. There was no yesterday of victory and devotion to which they could turn. Their past was not written in the faithfulness of prophets nor catalogued in the devotion of saints. Their inspiration was to lie in the promise of a future rather than in a heritage of a great history They who had been without the covenants given to Israel were to become the people of God, heirs of His promises and children of His household.

1. We pause to note that these people were to come to such a spiritual prospect by the bestowal of mercy. It was not by assuming certain joint obligations with the King of Kings, that such spiritual possibilities became theirs. There is nothing more positively nor emphatically stated in God's Word, whether we are attending to the Old Testament or the New Testament, than that God deals with man as a sinful creature. He is not simply a child needing guidance, he is a guilty soul needing pardon. He is more than an untaught subject needing to be aroused to the opportunities and obligations of citizenship; he is an alien needing reconciliation. I am sometimes haunted

with the feeling, or else assaulted with the temptation that this truth is too often dwelt upon in my own ministry. And yet in the face of the easy going teaching of the day which patronizingly calls on man to recognize the divine that is in him and which complacently admonishes him to bring to flower and to fruit the seed of spirituality which is innate to the soul, how can one keep quiet? God does not treat with man on the basis of equality. The difference between God and man is not simply in majesty of character, in the fullness and completeness of being. It is not that God is infinite and man is finite. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts nor His ways like our ways. There is a difference in spiritual quality. That difference is fundamental and vital. God is holy; we are unholy. God is sinless; man is sinful. God has taken account of that fact in every dispensation, whether He dealt with individuals or with nations. If we are to accept the oft repeated doctrine of the fatherhood of God, then any regard for reality must give to us the place of a prodigal son. We have journeyed to a far country. Our spiritual substance has been spent in careless living. If we have found our way back to the Father's house, we are outside the gate in tatters and rags. The only language that becomes our lips is the language of penitence. The only plea we are able to make is one for forgiveness. It is just so here. These people who could not boast a spiritual past, became citizens of the heavenly kingdom by the enfranchisement of grace.

2. A second observation is that they whom God makes His own by the grant of mercy are also given a great heritage. See how wealthy is this heritage as it is revealed in the context. We read, "Ye are a chosen generation." The revised version rendering is "Ye are an elect race." Chosen by whom? Elected by whom? Chosen by God, whose people they have become. Elected by the King of Kings, whose subjects they gladly acknowledge themselves to be. The language spoken to Israel of old is now applied to all

who have found Jesus precious in believing. Israel was once an elect nation. They had their national boundaries fixed. They were enjoined against any entanglements that would compromise their spirituality. Their social integrity was guarded by strict laws against intermarriage with strange and alien peoples.

It is not thus that the boundaries of a spiritual Israel are erected. The elect race, composed of all those who are the people of God, have no national or racial borders. They are to be found among all nations. They are in the Orient and in the Occident. In many ways they are different. After the estimates men place some of them have a great past, some have none at all; but whatever may be their history or lack of history, they are now chosen of God and the future is theirs. No color lines are drawn. No social barriers are lifted. God's discerning eye runs the boundary lines of this spiritually elect people and in His remunerative purpose they all alike are called to wealth untold.

They were to be a "royal priesthood". The promise given to Israel by Moses was that they should be a kingdom of priests. That is the significance of this expression. A royal priesthood means literally a kingly priesthood. Attention is first centered on relation or position, then on mission or service. We are first of all to become the people of God, the children of the King. Then we are to know ordination as priests at the altars of God. This priesthood is spiritual; it roots in character. Let there be no substitution of lighted candles and the smoke of incense at mere human altars for that devotion to God which pleases Him. Let no priestly robes be confused with the garments of purity. We need no "bleeding bird or bleeding beast nor hyssop branch nor sprinkling priest," to assist our approach unto God. Sacrifice for sin has been made once for all by our great High Priest.

Note again that those whom God makes His own people are to be a holy nation. Just what does that mean?

It demands holy inhabitants of this nation, both in experience and character. That, however, is not the full content of meaning. It seems specially to signify that they were to be a nation whose avocation or pursuit was holiness. Their wealth as a people was to be revealed in spirituality, in national righteousness.

A brilliant preacher said some seventy-five years ago that the English honored truthfulness, the French brilliancy, the Hindoos sublety and the Italian finesse, or skill and cunning. Those were the things which as nations they most largely emphasized. Another has said "For our American liberty we owe much to the ideas of Greece, and the legalties of Rome, but more to the moralities of Judea."

The contribution of the Hebrew nation to the world's civilization was not commercial nor primarily intellectual but religious. That is the most priceless contribution civilization has received. In that alone does the permanent wealth of any nation consist. We are told now that the material wealth of our own nation is several hundred billions of dollars. But if we have more gold than grace we are poor indeed. The abiding wealth of a nation does not consist merely in its commerce nor the wealth of a life in the abundance of things possessed. The South Sea Islands abound in natural fruitage. People live there without much toil and in comparative ease but these islands have produced no great poets, or prophets, or preachers, or martyrs. Scotland is poor. Here is a land of lakes and hills, thin soil and meager yield. Still her poets have sung, her prophets have foretold, her preachers have proclaimed, her saints have lived and died in such loyalty that there is scarcely another land in all the world where there is such a perfume of devotion.

This is one of the most difficult ideals we could undertake to support. Most people judge usefulness and ability by financial returns. Not many people knowingly and de-

liberately turn away from the offer of gold. I met a hero in South Dakota some years ago. He had been a practising physician. The last year he practised medicine his income was five thousand dollars. He left the practice of medicine to become a preacher of the Gospel and received for his first year's labors an income of less than one thousand dollars. Does it pay?

Nobody knows the names of the fox hunting, wine drinking, ease loving clergy of the eighteenth century in England, but the name of John Wesley is a household word in the Christian world. The common people cannot speak the names of the captains of industry in London thirty or forty years back but thousands of earth's poor in all lands where the Gospel is preached speak the names of General and Catherine Booth with gratitude. In a little while many financial leaders of today will be treated as mere business figures; but thousands will rise up to bless real saints wherever they have lived and labored. The world is slow, discouragingly slow, but it finally places the right value on men and things.

It is in this field the people of God are to enrich the world. They touch the things of earth only to make them useful. Their cry is for holiness. Their pursuit is holiness. Their greatest possession is holiness. Not business astuteness but saintliness is the greatest recommendation of the church. Not political theory nor social program is the greatest offer the church can make to a needy world but witness of the Savior who is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

They who had no past are to become a people for God's possession. That is the literal of the words translated in this passage "a peculiar people". They who boast no prophet's visit are to have God with them. They who have been given no divine missions are to preach the Gospel to all peoples and in all lands. Their spiritual Zion becomes beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.

As we walk about her we may "tell the towers thereof. mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces and tell to the generations following that God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death." Wherever the people of God dwell and wherever they serve "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall blossom as the rose." They shall become the temples of God. He will live in them and move in them. How great the enrichment of grace! How marvelous the purposes of God!

3. We tarry for a moment to notice the result of this marvelous revelation of God to undeserving men. Let us read it: "That ye should show forth the praise of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." It was He who found us when we had no past. It was He who redeemed us when no other help was nigh. It was He who showed mercy. It was He who gave heritage to those who were without inheritance. It was He who made us an elect race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a possessed people. We have come out of poverty into His riches, out of our hopelessness into an eternal expectancy, out of our sin into His likeness, away from tatters and rags to shoes prepared for the feet, royal robes and signet rings. We lift our hymns of praise. We offer our petitions of gratitude. We join with the blood-washed of the ages in redemption's song and stand in perpetual wonder at "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be rich."

The Second Birth

THE SECOND BIRTH

> **TEXT**: JOHN 3:6 and 7: *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."*

The great messages of the Master were spoken in the presence of great need rather than great crowds. The message of Jesus on the well of water springing up unto everlasting life was spoken to one needy woman at a Samaritan well. The great utterance we have come to know as the Sermon on the Mount was spoken primarily to the circle of his own disciples. Our text is part of a message Jesus delivered to a night audience composed of one man.

At least two reasons have been assigned for the coming of Nicodemus to Jesus at night time. By some it is supposed that, being a secret follower, he came in the night that the leaders of his nation might not know that he had more than a passing interest in the prophet who was so strangely moving among them. He was a secret follower. By others it is supposed that the throngs were so crowding Jesus during the hours of his busy days as that little opportunity was afforded for Nicodemus to approach Him and ask of Him those questions that were uppermost in His own thought and receive from Him those answers which the longings of his heart called for.

We are not especially concerned as to which of these reasons seems the more probable or whether either of them fully explains the night visit of the influential Nicodemus. He came as a student to a teacher. He came with the patronage of a partial confidence. He said, "We know thou art a teacher come from God." Then he did a very profound and sensible thing: he connected the character of Jesus with the nature of the works he had been performing. He said, "No man can do these miracles that thou

doest except God be with him." He was impressed not more by the power which made the miracles possible than by their unselfish and helpful nature.

Jesus did not enter into any discussion with this noted Pharisee as to the nature of His miracles or the effects of His ministries upon the people. He went immediately to that condition of nature, to that state of heart, which made Nicodemus a stranger to the mysteries of spiritual experience. He then unfolded to him the new birth, its necessity, its nature, its process and condition.

1. We are impressed as we stand at the very threshold of this passage with the Master's emphasis upon necessity. "Ye must be born again" said Jesus. There is back of this statement the finality of divine authority. So unequivocal is this utterance that there is no room for argument on the ground of mere expediency. Jesus did not say it is the better of many ways or the safer of two ways. He said it is the only way. Other things may be important. This is essential. Other commands are not to be ignored, but to disregard this command is finally to lose everything.

No one will misunderstand us if we say that there are commands coming to us, backed up by divine authority, which prove to be means of grace and factors in the building of the soul which, nevertheless, when separated unto themselves, are not positive soul essentials. We have never been inclined to mock at water baptism. The New Testament supports the ordinance with divine sanction. It is, when rightly interpreted, a beautiful ordinance. It symbolizes the separation of the Christian disciple from the world. It prophesies the baptism with the Holy Spirit which only Jesus can administer. The church is not at liberty to ignore it. We ought not to discount it. But baptism with water nor in water is a positive, absolute essential for the salvation of the soul. If that were true, then there is a sense in which my relation to God depends not alone on the attitude of my soul toward Him, but on

the ministry of another man like unto myself. There is introduced a factor of uncertainty. There are times when the incidents or accidents of life make it practically impossible for the ordinance of baptism to be administered to individuals. The thief on the cross is an example. Penitent and willing to risk his destiny in the hands of the Man of Galilee when He should come into his Kingdom, there was no way in which that suffering victim could at that time have been baptized in water.

And, what we say concerning the ordinance of baptism, we may say concerning the ordinance we have come to know in the church as the Lord's Supper. It is beautiful in its symbolic significance. A gracious privilege is given to the people of God in that gathering about the altars of the church they may break the bread which symbolizes His broken body and drink from the cup which is a symbol of His shed blood. Many of us can witness to the spiritual help which we have received as we have partaken of these sacred symbols. The church should not ignore such an ordinance. Even the Master said, "As oft as ye do it, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come." This memorial of His sacrifice, this finger of prophecy pointing to His glorious return, should not be forgotten in the church. Nevertheless, men do not have to take of the bread which my hands break or drink of the cup which I lift in order to personal salvation. The releasing of the soul from sin is a prerogative so fully belonging to the divine, a deliverance so utterly impossible to the human that no ordinance, no priest, no preacher may intervene between the soul that seeks such a deliverance and the God who alone can give it.

We have to do with a necessity in this text. Whether we have been baptized or have not been baptized, we must be born again. Whether we have partaken of the sacred symbols belonging to the celebration of the Lord's Supper or have failed or refused, spiritual birth is an essential.

Every human resolve but starts us toward this epoch of the soul; every outward reformation leaves us at the gate of this divine change.

Jesus, in His dialogue with Nicodemus, makes the ground for a necessary spiritual birth very clear. He argues such a necessity from two standpoints. It is neccessary in order to spiritual life. The Master's own putting is, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It would appear that whatever may be the meaning of the word flesh as used in this passage, the truth is essentially the same. If we say that the word flesh simply refers to human nature, then from human parentage and by a physical birth we have only that which human nature can impart. The Master positively intimates that spiritual life, life from above, is not a part of that equipment. Or we may, as did the old theologians, believe that the word flesh refers to the depravity of nature entailed upon a fallen race. Men, though born without personal guilt, do not have the positive endowment of spiritual life. For there is more in our oft used term conversion than simply the forgiveness for past transgression. There is the regeneration of the soul into newness of life. There is imparted to the soul a life and love never experienced before so that men live under the domination of new motives and are conscious of new enablements. On such a ground it may be logically argued that the new birth is a necessity even in cases where wrong has not been so followed as to bring personal guilt, if indeed such cases may be found.

We are told betimes that when Jesus said, "Ye must be born again, because that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit," He was talking to Nicodemus the man. It was a mystic problem, addressed to a mystic mind. Note please that Jesus did not say, "Ye must be born again because you are mature, because you have rubbed up against an indifferent world, because you no longer have the seeing eye and simplicity

of attitude belonging to a child." He predicated the necessity for the new birth on a law. That law is announced in the words we have already quoted, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It seems a logical conclusion to say that just as a physical birth is an absolute essential to a physical existence in a physical environment, so is the spiritual birth absolutely necessary to a spiritual existence in a spiritual kingdom.

The second ground of necessity the Master suggests in the words "Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God in the sense that the Master is speaking of it here does not come with observation. It does not have boundaries which may be searched with the physical eye. Men may not journey in the flesh to its seat of empire or its capital. The Kingdom of God is spiritual. The comprehension which the new birth makes possible is a spiritual comprehension. We shall begin to behold the beauties and the verities of the Kingdom when we have been made alive by the touch of the Spirit. Lowliness, humility, tenderness, simplicity. meekness, love, the fruit of the Spirit, all of these things become beautiful to the eye of him who has become a child in the family of God.

Are we not correct in saying that it is just here that men fail to discern that which is spiritually beautiful and true in the world about us? To be interesting to those who have not known the new birth a thing must have physical charm or it must appeal to the esthetic. Many are taken by pomp and splendor, sometimes alas, by tawdry trappings, cheap and meaningless. How important, therefore, this birth of the Spirit in order to spiritual comprehension and apprehension of things of God. To the eyes thus enlightened the family of God becomes royal, the progress af the church becomes as the marching of armies, the evangelization of men becomes a sure token that the city of God is coming down. The vision of love and faith looks afar to that day when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall

cover the earth as the waters cover the sea and all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

The universal necessity for the new birth is impressed upon us again by the appraisal which Jesus made of the character of Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee. Whatever else that may have meant, it signified that he belonged to the strictest sect of religious Jews. Faithful to ordinances they were, supporters of the externals of religion, zealous in religious practices, and yet if he was a typical representative it could be said of them, as it was said of him, that they were outside the spiritual Kingdom. The warning of that fact takes on significance when we remember the imposing array of mere externals to which men turn today, when we recall how often people depend upon program and outward sign and creaturely effort rather than a divine life within.

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He was a sharer of the culture of the day and had no doubt been brought up in a home of refinement and lifted to a place of authority among the people. Indeed it is supposed by some that he may have been the president of the Jewish Sanhedrin. He did not belong to what some would derisively call the slum crowd, the back-street folk. He was nevertheless outside the Kingdom.

When Nicodemus expressed wonder at the Master's teaching on a spiritual birth, Jesus spoke in seeming amazement, "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" He was an interpreter of Israel's ancient law. He was familiar with the history of those who in the past had known a change of heart. His spiritual ignorance was without excuse. It comes with warning to us today. Familiarity with religious customs, even with religious teachings, a knowledge of the spiritual biographies of those who have gone before us, will not supply the lack of spiritual life in our own experiences. If with such admirable traits

and splendid training Nicodemus was a stranger to the realities of a spiritual birth, friend of mine whose eyes may scan these pages, what is your condition? What is mine? "Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again."

2. The change to which Jesus called the attention of Nicodemus was so thorough and complete as that it was designated a spiritual birth. That gives us some insight into its nature and meaning. We call to mind in this connection the word spoken by the apostle to the Gentiles in the second epistle to the Corinthian church. He said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold all things are become new." The Revised Version rendering of the passage is, "He is a new creation."

Should there break upon the visions of astronomers, unexpected and unannounced, a new world, the papers for the coming days would be filled with the comment the astronomers should make on that world. They would be talking to us about its size, its probable distance from the earth, its effect upon the earth and other bodies in comparative proximity to it. Should such a thing happen there would be back of it no more of wonder and finally no greater illustration of power than belong to the regeneration of a soul. Man under the life-giving touch of the Spirit becomes a new creation. There are released within his own nature forces never in operation before. He possesses a life only God can implant, a love only God can give, a peace resting on no foundation earth can furnish. The man himself becomes a new entity in a spiritual universe. He is a new unit which God equips and employs for the advancement of the interests of the divine Kingdom.

That is the glory of the new birth. Jesus does not predicate His expectations of kingdom building on monuments and epitaphs in spiritual cemeteries. He expects to win by the witness and worth of those who have been made alive by the life-giving touch of the Spirit.

Implicit in the experience of the new birth is the offer of divine enablement for living as Jesus would have us live. There is in it a spiritual restraint and soul contentment which makes one master of the situation in the midst of the allurements of a sinful world.

We remember that story coming to us out of Greek mythology of how Ulysses, in passing by boat the enchanted island where the sirens were accustomed to sing, had the ears of himself and his sailors filled with wax. Some of them were hained to masts lest they should hear the enchanting music of the sirens, turn into their island harbor and go down to destruction as others had done before them. The story continues that Orpheus endowed of the gods with superior musical talent, when passing the same enchanted island and hearing the sirens as they made their alluring music, picked up his own instruments and made music so much more charming and appealing as that the sirens could no longer tempt.

That is mythology in Greek literature but becomes a fact in the spiritual realm. Jesus Christ can give to the soul a song so beautiful and endow the heart with pleasures so lasting and surround the life with influences so beneficent and blessed as that the offers of the world cease to allure and the temptations of a Christless environment lose their appeal.

We were holding a meeting in a first church in the west when unexpectedly we received an unusual testimony to the results of the new birth. A young man charged with armed house breaking had been tried in the courts of the city before a jury of his peers and convicted. He was waiting sentence. The pastor, some welfare workers, a close personal friend, and myself went down to interview the judge of the court. We talked to him about the youth of the young fellow and urged upon him the wisdom of giving him another chance. The young man had, during the days belonging to his trial, made some religious pre-

tensions. I shall never forget how that judge, athletic of body, rugged in intellect, himself not a professor of religion, said to us, "If I believed B— W— had really been converted I would pardon him. I do not think he has. I think his religious professions are mere pretensions. The wisest course, it seems to me, is to send him to the penitentiary and let him have a first taste of his wrong doing. It may save him from something more serious in the future." We did not obtain the young man's release but I went from the office of that judge with the meaning of the new birth singing itself in my heart. The birth of the Spirit means honesty where there has been dishonesty, social integrity where there has been irregularity, the truthful attitude where there has been falsehood, and love of sobriety and uprightness where there has been unfaithfulness and disloyalty. We live a new life in a spiritual world when we have been born of Him.

3. Jesus comes to a consideration of the processes of the new birth by the use of the striking words, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The passage no doubt has a mystic content. Two facts speak to us out of it. The processes of the Spirit are varied. He approaches men on the basis of their individual temperaments. That is suggested in the expression, "The wind bloweth." Sometimes the wind comes as a soft zephyr. At other times as a fearful blast. A volume could be written on the mission of the winds. An interesting chapter would be the almost freakish behavior of the wind in time of storm and tempest. Things seemingly immovable are sometimes shaken to pieces. Under other conditions things fragile and easily swept away are left undisturbed. It is the way of the wind. It speaks to us of the variety of operation belonging to the wind.

The ministry of the Spirit is just as varied. Upon some He moves in tenderness. Into some lives He comes

with the quiet of the morning without rustle of leaf or disturbance of calm. Into other lives built on a rugged mold He comes with the sweep of a tempest. Emotions are deep, manifestations are sometimes striking. To those who are unacquainted with varying temperamental reactions to spiritual truth the manifestations seem exaggerated and licensed. In it all God is making approach to the soul in harmony with its own nature and laws. He cannot reveal Himself in the same way to the guileless Nathaniel that He does to the impetuous Peter. The vision necessary to arrest the imperial Saul of Tarsus might have come without effect to a less rugged character. God is acquainted with the path into every life. He knows the effective approach to every soul. The Spirit respects these vital factors of personality in His operations.

The processes of the Spirit cannot be explained. That, too, is suggested by the language the Master employs, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth." The analogy here does not rest on a lack of knowledge of the fact of operation either of the wind or of the Spirit, as some seem to have inferred. We may know the wind is blowing though we are not able to explain all its processes. We may not know the point of its beginning. We may not know the mission of its continuance. We may not be able to tell when and where the voice of the wind is hushed. We can know it is blowing. We come out in the morning and say the wind is from the east, or the west, or the north, or the south. We are talking about the direction from which it comes. We are in no sense explaining the mystery of its coming.

It is so when the Spirit moves upon a life. We may not be able to tell the how of His coming or describe the processes by which He invades the life. We can know that we are the objects of spiritual ministries. That is the effective answer devout men may make when they are asked to bring their experiences into the laboratory for analysis

and explanation. They are in the presence of mysteries they cannot explain but also in possession of experiences about which they are certain.

One of the most interesting of New Testament stories is that having to do with a man born blind to whom Jesus gave the touch which brought his sight. It was on a Sabbath day when his vision was restored. The scribes and Pharisees complained for that reason. Impressed with the greatness of the physical deliverance which Jesus had wrought, they went to the parents of the man. The answers those parents gave are both illuminating and amusing. Permit a modern version of the conversation held. The leaders of the Jews said, "Do we understand you to say that this is your son?" The parents answered, "Yes, he is our son." They replied, "We would like to have you state whether or not he was really born blind." The parents answered, "Yes, he was born blind." They shrewdly framed the next question, saying, "Now just what is your understanding of the way in which he received his sight?" The parents replied, "He is of age, ask him." Our American version of that answer would be, "He is twenty-one years old, make your inquiry of him." These enemies of Jesus then sought out the man. They approached him in the same shrewd and subtle fashion. "You say you were born blind." "Yes, I have never had my sight until now." "Will you tell us again who it was that gave to you your vision?" "It was a man whose name is Jesus." "Now will you explain to us just how it was that He restored your sight?" The man gave answer, while the wonder of it all came with increasing meaning to him, "I felt the operation of no magic forces. I discerned no surgery going on which took the scales from my eyes. I am sure of this one thing: whereas I was once blind, I now see."

That is the reply of twice-born men to the questions or unbelief whether expressed in scientific formula or the language of the streets. Processes are beyond us. The

methods which God employs escape the vision and defy analysis, but the soul in assurance lifts its witness: "There was once spiritual blindness; we now possess spiritual vision. Once the burden of sin weighed us down as a crushing load; now the load is lifted. Once we were dead in trespasses and sins; now are we quickened into newness of life by the life-giving Lord."

That is the standing miracle. Any movement whose leadership is acquainted with the influence of mind over matter or who knows the value of psychic suggestion in certain types of physical ailment, can hang crutches on the wall, pile up walking canes and count those who witness to physical healing by numbers. It takes Jesus to heal the soul. Only the life of God can transform the nature change the motives and put back of human conduct both incentive and enablement for correct living.

4. The conditions belonging to the spiritual change the Master urges are made very simple. Two figures are used having the same meaning. Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The condition which that passage suggests is that of looking. There was life for a look in that ancient day. Life waits on the lifting of the soul's vision today.

"Look and live, my brother live;
Look to Jesus now and live."

In the familiar passage we speak of so often as John 3:16, we read, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These words learned by many at the knee of motherhood, offer life eternal in answer to faith. Not by merit, not by struggle, not by our own efforts, but by faith alone are we made alive in Christ Jesus our Lord. The simplicity of this condition holds us. Its democracy inspires us. Rich and poor,

learned and illiterate, known or unknown, whatever our race or color or tribe, the life of God is offered to us on condition that we exercise the latent possibility of faith within the soul. It is because this condition is so easily possible with men everywhere that Jesus follows this Gospel announcement with a converse statement, "He that believeth not is condemned already."

The doors of the spiritual kingdom are open. The Master who invites us to treasures belonging to citizenship in that kingdom, Himself becomes the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The conditions are simple. The need is imperative. A thousand voices urge us to enter into life. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

"If I Had Not Come"

or The World's Debt to Jesus

"IF I HAD NOT COME"

or

THE WORLD'S DEBT TO JESUS

TEXT: JOHN 15:22: *"If I had not come."*

Our theme is implied in the text rather than definitely stated. Jesus has just been emphasizing that in the world about them the disciples may expect much the same treatment as that accorded to the Master. "The servant is not greater than his Lord." A case in illustration is found in the persecution of Jesus by the Jews—His own people after the flesh. They had not kept His sayings and they will not keep the sayings of His followers. They had persecuted the Lord. The disciples may not claim exemption from the same treatment. Jesus passes from this warning of an unfriendly world to the positive declaration that in His coming and work all doubt as to His Messiahship was left without excuse. It was this conviction and the guilt consequent upon indifference to the revelation it brought that our Lord was dwelling upon directly.

A closer reading of the context, however, will show that three truths are brought to light by the coming of Jesus. First, He demonstrated in life and ministry that He was the long looked for Messiah. Second, He brought the vision of the Father to men. Third, by all that His coming meant, He left those who rejected Him uncovered in their sins. We must not lose the larger significance underlying this text in that it declares not only the convincing and convicting results of the presence of Jesus among the people but brings under review all the enrichment which has come to the world of men in God's gift of His Son to us and for us.

The Scriptures locate the motives for God's gifts to men in two things: Divine love and human need. "God so loved that he gave." One of our leaders has said: "As a matter of fact, God had to give." That puts stress on the oughtness of love, the compulsion of a divine affection. The love of God is as strong an incentive with Him as any other moral or legal obligation we may predicate of man's relation to God. But the needs of the race moved the Father also. The woman carefully sweeping the house in search for the coin, the shepherd going in quest for the lost sheep, the father waiting, looking, solicitous for the return of the prodigal, are the pictures Jesus gives of the estimate God places upon and the interest He shows in a needy race.

The text, with its larger implications, seems to lie in this field of human need. We are to ask, how great would have been our poverty had Jesus not come on redemptive mission to the earth? How rich we are since there was an advent anthem, a star in the East, a Child born, a Son given, whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace?" How much we owe the Christ who came to birth one silent, holy night in the little town of Bethlehem? Those are great questions. Our answers shall be reverent. They certainly shall not, cannot be full.

The Father's Face

If Jesus had not come we should lack the full revelation of God the Father. We have anticipated that thought. Twice in the message Jesus gave to His disciples just before His Gethsemane experience did He indicate as a part of His mission that of revealing the Father. Speaking to His disciples as a whole He said, "If ye had known me ye should have known my Father also, and from hence forth ye know and have seen Him." That statement provoked the urgent request of Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus answered him, and there is a note of sadness in the answer, "Have I been

so long a time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The same truth is brought out in the containing passage of the text. Jesus said, "He that hateth me hateth my Father also." They rejected the Father in rejecting Him. They hated the Father in their hatred of Him. They beheld the Father when they looked upon Him.

It is well to remember that Jesus came not to reveal a fatherhood relatioship, but rather to reveal the Father. If the tenderest conception men have known is that of the relation of the parent to the child we are still reminded that every human example of such relationship has been marred by the finite, the partial, the sinful. We find illustrations of this truth on every hand.

The attitude of Abraham toward Isaac was beautiful after Abraham had qualified as an Old Testament saint and had entered into a close friendship with God. In the background, however, there is a shadow of Ishmael, Abraham's son by a bond woman. It is not a clear, untarnished fatherhood we behold.

Isaac, bent with age, and with bedimmed vision, makes ready to bless his offspring and to bestow upon Esau, his first born his patriarchal blessing. Jacob advised and assisted by his mother, deceives the aged father and receives the patriarchal blessing, as he had before purchased from Esau the birthright. Here we have the illustration of a decrepit fatherhood, an unknowing one; one that can be misled and deceived.

It is a pathetic and moving picture we look upon as Jacob goes down with his sons into Egypt. Here he is to look again on the face of the long lost Joseph. That very incident, preceded as it is with the account of the deception of the sons of Israel after they had sold their brother into slavery, reminds us of how Jacob is reaping the results of a deception the example for which he himself had set.

Then we have Eli the priest, indulgent, soft, seemingly wounded deeply because of the moral uncleanness of his

sons, and yet without integrity sufficient to stand up and rebuke their wrongdoing.

We need not multiply examples. Every human illustration of fatherhood men have had has been marked by some imperfection or marred by sin and human treachery. This meaning of fatherhood must be more clearly outlined; This song of fatherhood must be sung out in clearer notes. It is just this mission that Jesus fulfilled as He walked among men. He revealed a Father whose actions are dictated by infinite wisdom, whose motives are rooted in infinite love, whose character is supported by infinite justice, in whom there is no darkness at all, and yet whose province it is to be merciful and kind.

It will appear immediately that this likeness of God the Father to Jesus Christ, the Son, does not primarily refer to the body which Jesus took in the mystery of incarnation. God is a spirit. He is not revealed by hands and feet and lips, except as these become instrumental in expressing spiritual qualities. There may be physical likenesses which do not result from correspondence in character. A little while before William Jennings Bryan passed to his reward, I saw in the newspapers a picture of Mr. Bryan and a man who, because of physical resemblance, was called his double. Likeness was traced merely on the physical plane. No one claimed for this double the ability to stir men out of their lethargy and move them to conflict against wrong such as the great Commoner possessed. Ever and anon some man appears on the scene with some of the physical characteristics of Abraham Lincoln, but to no one of them in any large way do there belong the mental girth, the capacity for sympathy, the knowledge of human nature, and the genius for leadership over men which Lincoln had. Those qualities which marked the greatness of Lincoln and Bryan were largely spiritual qualities; they lie deeper than physical likeness.

There must have been a wonderful tenderness in the eyes of Jesus. The voice that subdued the rough billows

of the Sea of Galilee must have been strong and clear. We are sure He possessed the calm, quiet dignity belonging to real greatness. The body prepared for Him by the Father was peculiarly fitted for both ministry and sacrifice. None of us, perhaps, can escape the wish that we might have seen Him and listened to Him when He dwelt among men in the flesh. With all these things true, I wonder if it were not possible to bear some physical likeness to the Son of Man without sharing heart likeness to Him. Jesus became one with universal man in the incidents of His birth. We are told in the Epistle to the Romans that He was made in the likeness of sinful man. The prophet Isaiah declared that there was no beauty in Him that men should desire Him. But when we behold His spiritual beauty, He is the fairest of ten thousand to the soul. We can only reach the heights of spiritual likeness to Him by the bestowal of His abounding grace.

Jesus brings to revelation the likeness of the Father's person, but He illustrates also the attitude of the Father toward men. God's love is like the love of Jesus, unselfish, seeking, forgiving, receiving. The Father's attitude toward a weary world is pictured by Jesus when He stands and invites, saying: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." The divine grief over an indifferent people is shown by Jesus when He came near and beheld the city of Jerusalem and wept over it saying, "If thou hadst known at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thy eyes." The truth is that the love, the compassion, the holiness, the mercy, the justice of God, found complete revelation and vindication in the life and ministry of Jesus.

A Perfect Example

If Jesus had not come, the world should lack its only perfect example of manhood. There have been many good men. There have been those whose lives were partially exemplary. His life furnishes us a perfect pattern from His

birth in Bethlehem's manger to His ascension from Olivet's summit. There have been those who were genuine in devotion but lacking in poise; some who were ardent and heroic but short on kindness and tolerance; some who were endowed with love and tenderness but lacking in integrity and uprightness. It was not so with Jesus. He was strong without harshness, tender without gushing sentiment. His love knew no selfishness. His compassion no boundary lines. Springs of divine grace welling up within His personality flowed out through channels so natural and human as that timidity spoke in His presence, the despairing heart was encouraged, the sinful soul was given a new lease on hope and a sin diseased race was inspired to appropriate life rich, full and abiding. Theologians have labored with this great fact and have given to it the best expression of which they are capable. We are content with the thought that He was not more uniquely the only begotten Son of God than He was the Son of Man. How close He comes as He speaks our language, walks in our pathway and enters into the relationships with which we are acquainted.

Contrasted with Him the limitations belonging to every mere man who has lived are easily seen. The perfections of His whole life stand out in comparison with the ebb and tide of the lives of others. In most instances manhood must labor to cover the frivolities of earlier years. The sober experiences to which Christian men and women come as they walk with God in old age are often embittered by the memories of a prodigal youth. Paul the apostle was rugged and imperial. Back in the past he had been a proud, self-righteous Pharisee, a blasphemer, and a destroyer of good. John in his old age was the apostle of perfect love, but in his young manhood he had been torn by unholy ambitions and was betimes a veritable Boanerges, a son of thunder. Bunyan, from his Bedford prison, outlines the Christian's race, numbers his foes, discloses to him the pitfalls, and lifts to his enraptured vision the city of God at the end of the way, but bewails the wickedness, and

profanity of his youth. Thank God for one example given to men without a cloud over its childhood, youth, or maturity.

Just as Jesus was exemplary for the whole life, so was He free from any human prejudices which cloud His example as the Christian centuries come and go. He was born in one of the smallest countries in the world, but His love and sympathy are not confined. He was a Jew after the flesh. Nothing in the fundamentals of His teaching would ever suggest it. It took a miracle of grace to transform Saul of Tarsus from Jewish prejudice to Gospel universalism. It took a vision to get Peter to the house of Cornelius, the devout Gentile. One of the problems of modern missionary effort lies in the fact that Gospel light has not always been perfectly reflected. Men sometimes undertake to impose their own notions and methods and are failures. The unevangelized masses of men may not understand always the American emphasis, or the English accent, but they understand the teachings of Jesus. He is a citizen of the whole wide world and speaks a universal language.

The world is cursed today with its racial antipathies and hatreds. The rising tide of color takes on meaning because it marks the rising tide of enmity and jealousy. Providence has no doubt given to the different races their characteristics. None of these, in the thought of God, is to be a barrier to brotherhood, or to hinder the application of Christian principles in the solution of race problems. Now and then a man who talks more than he thinks rises up to insist that the black man, or some other man of color, has no national leadership and little spiritual possibility. That is just the first step to saying that such a man has no rights that are to be regarded by designing white men. It is sufficient to say that such an attitude is utterly alien to the spirit of the Master. He has a mission and purpose lasting as eternity for the alert Japanese, the busy Chinaman, the spiritually aspiring Indian. He loves that race in ebony

one of whose big, brawny, brainy, poetic representatives talks about "God's carpet of green nailed down with daisies." When our brothers in black sing with a pathos and beauty that we can but poorly imitate, "I got a harp, you got a harp, all of God's children got a harp," they create the desire to sing in our own souls whether there is the ability there or not. There may not be great poetry in language and thought in that negro spiritual, but there is the poetry of desire and longing.

Jesus had a love as wide as the race. He belonged to no exclusive clan. He had no gospel for the white man as such, or for the black man, the yellow man, or the red man. He did not announce a single principle that is not just as capable of application as it was nineteen hundred years ago. He was not Oriental or Occidental. He was neither European, or to use the language of our day, American. He belonged to the world and to all time. Children were charmed by Him, young manhood was challenged by His call, old age was supported by His promises. In Him we see Heaven's pattern of manhood. It is the only perfect example the world has ever had.

Love That Gave All

Jesus furnishes to the world its supreme illustration of sacrifice. We are held by the purpose back of the sacrifice which He made. The mystics make much of the fact that there is a law of sacrifice written deep in the heart of nature. Life on the lower plane is given up in the interest of life on the higher level. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable kingdom, and the vegetable the animal kingdom. Jesus seems to have reversed this law. With Him, it is the higher giving itself for the lower, the strong being offered for the weak, the pure making sacrifice for the impure. There is in the Christianity of Jesus no law of the survival of the fittest. There is a tender care and support of the weak, a revival and renewal of the spiritually unfit. Jesus lived on that level. He

could say, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." "I am among you as one that serveth." The Master offered His life prompted by this same spirit of self-giving. He was a lamb without spot or blemish. He gave His life as a ransom for many. There was back of it all a redemptive purpose.

Impressive, too, is the voluntary element belonging to the sacrificial ministry of Jesus. He did not assume obligation under a divine fiat. He was one with the Father in the wisdom of His planning. His meat and drink—the very sustenance of life—was to do the will of God. Most of us have come up under what we might call a law of necessity. We were born in homes of comparative poverty. In that matter, we had no privilege of choice. It is, however, no real hurt when we come to rightly view it. The man who has had to toil and has learned to love it does not need commiseration. Pity is due the man who has never known such necessity. What we are trying to make clear just now is that our deprivations are incidental to birth. We have had to deal with them as best we could, just as we have had to adjust ourselves to other conditions over which we had no choice. It was different with Jesus. He came to physical want out of renounced affluence. He partook of our poverty after voluntarily laying aside the wealth of Heaven. The poverty of Jesus was not assumed out of touch with men.

The newsprints carried the story awhile ago of how the ex-governor of one of our states and his wife entered into an agreement for friendly separation. The wife was to take most of the property and remain loyal to the programs of the society circles in which she moved. He on the other hand, with comparatively little, was to revert to the type of another day and go into seclusion. He was assuming a measure of the burden of poverty, but it was poverty hidden away; not poverty homeless and shivering on the street corners. Jesus was homeless when men went from His very presence to the comfort of their own homes.

He was hungry after ministering sometimes to those who went from under His tender touch to their own well-provided meals.

When Peter took his sword on that memorable night in Gethsemane and smote the ear of the servant of the high priest, Jesus bade him put up his sword. He declared that even then He could have asked for twelve legions of angels and they would have been given Him. He did not ask for them. Gethsemane's agony and bloody sweat, and Calvary's heartbreak were voluntary.

Some of us have been poor because we were born poor and could not escape it. Jesus chose poverty, that He might enrich men. We have denied ourselves because our very circumstances demanded such discipline. Jesus pleased not Himself that He might please God. Men have chosen martyrdom when there was no other way for them but treachery and disloyalty. Jesus freely laid down His life when no man could have taken it from Him.

He did vastly more than to discover and support the law of sacrifice found in the world. He gave Himself freely a ransom for the unjust and the undeserving that He might bring them to God. The world marvels at the revelation of love which He gave, and in the very nature of the case can find no other illustration of sacrifice such as His life furnishes.

O Love, that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to hide from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

He Shall Not Fail

The world owes to Jesus the only permanently successful method of conquest. The means men have used in winning conquest over their fellows have been destructive. They have conquered by mere might of arms. Hannibal the Carthaginian, Alexander the Greek, Julius Caesar the Roman, Napoleon, Frederick the Great, all of these men won their victories by force. None of them undertook to conquer by love and kindness. Their victories were usually shortlived. A government built on force is always under siege. Governments are necessary for the organization of the forces of law and order, but they cannot live if they foster inequalities, forget the rights of the common people and undertake to rule by the right of might.

Jesus undertook conquest by a new way. He did not take the lives of His enemies. He gave His life freely for them. He undertook no method of physical force for the subduing of the strength of men, but based His hope and expectancy of final success on the appeal to heart loyalty. He appeals by dying love and men own Him conqueror. He wins not with cannonry but by a Cross. The most courageous words ever uttered were those words of Jesus. "And I, if I be lifted up, from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He assures us that by His death the heart of man shall be taken captive. And He is succeeding. There are millions today scattered among the nations of the earth who are glad to take their places under the banner of the Cross. There are multitudes who count not their lives dear if they may by any means spread abroad the glory of His name.

The Scriptures lead us to believe this is His only, His permanent method of winning men. Evil has been restrained by the outpourings of judgment in every dispensation. God is too wise to make a mistake, and too good to mistreat men. When He visits with judgment it is always in harmony with divine justice. But men are not made holy by a display of power, except it be the power

of love and grace. The blood that cleanses is the blood of sacrifice. The might that subdues is the might of love.

We have read somewhere, though we do not vouch for its historical accuracy, of a warrior who went forth to battle in the olden days. He conquered. After he had won victory decisive and complete, he made provision for the enlightment of the people over whom he had come to rule. He gave them large liberties as citizens and supported every means within his reach for caring for their best welfare. He was approached by friends who protested with the question, "What are you going to do with those who have been your foes?" He answered, "We will make them. by love and kind treatment, our friends."

Jesus shall win. He supports the right, but wins the allegiance of men by love that will not let them go. America shall be won. China shall own His sway. India shall pour out her longing at the foot of the Cross. Ethiopia shall lift her hymns of praise beside the flowing Nile. "And they shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North and from the South and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Millions shall hymn in chorus:

Let every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all.

The Way of the Cross

Jesus shows the path back to God and home by way of the Cross. The world in its sin is away from God. On that point we need no argument. It is just as certain that men do not find their way back to God again in their own strength. Jesus respects the temperaments of men. He probably had to deal with almost every type in the apostolic college. His appeals are varied. There are many ap-

proaches. There is only one way. There are statements in God's Word which leave no room for quibbling about the necessity for the new and living way opened up by the death of Jesus. We read, "There is no other name given under Heaven and among men whereby we must be saved." Again, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." John tells us the heart of the very message which he is writing is that "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." We are not permitted to use our imaginations and describe the many doors through which men may pass to life. God has revealed one way. So far as we know, it is absolutely the only way. It is a safe, sure way. It brings the soul to God and home at last.

The sacrifice of Jesus bridges the chasm between God and man. By His life and by His death every high and holy standard is supported. All the interests of God and man are conserved. Through His sacrifice forgiveness is offered, peace is bestowed, holiness is inwrought, life is enfranchised. The hour of death becomes for His followers a coronation ceremony, and the gates of glory are lifted to receive the marching hosts of the church of the first born. "If I had not come," says Jesus in the text. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

"If I Go Not Away"

"IF I GO NOT AWAY"

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." JOHN 16:7.

These are arresting words spoken under interesting conditions. A little while before, Jesus, in company with His disciples, had gone into an upper room in the city of Jerusalem. There He had kept with them the Passover feast. About the table where the feast was celebrated were all His immediate disciples, those whom He had called and ordained as apostles. We are told that even the hand of Judas Iscariot was with the hand of Jesus in the dish. The supper is over. Judas has gone out into the night to complete the plan for betraying the Lord. Jesus has given to the disciples that remarkable lesson in humility when He girds himself with a towel and washes the disciples' feet.

There arises some differences of opinion just here. By some Bible scholars it is supposed that already they had gone from the room where the passover was eaten and and are now journeying, a confused and wondering group of disciples, the Christ of sorrows among them, toward the garden of Gethsemane with its gathered gloom and bloody sweat. Others believe that not yet have they passed from the place of the solemn feast but, preparatory to their going, are waiting with consuming eagerness on every word the Master speaks. He gives them promises, sad with the prophecy of coming tragedy but radiant with the assurance of sufficient spiritual resources for the final permanent victory. He binds them with commands that hold them in waiting for spiritual preparation before they undertake world evangelism. He warns them that the day will soon come when whosoever shall take their lives will think that he is doing the service of God. In the midst of the atmosphere which the facts we have just noted would inevitably create, He speaks to them the words which make the text.

We need not be suprised that there were many things about the sacrificial ministry of Jesus which his disciples did not at this time fully understand. They depended upon Him. Their hope was in Him. But they had not yet comprehended many of the phases belonging to His redemptive mission. They did not understand the necessity for His death. Redemption by sacrifice is a divine revelation, not a system of theology or philosophy evolved by man. Its necessity as well as its sufficiency has been made known by God Himself. It is not strange therefore that the disciples were deeply grieved and greatly confused at any suggestion of the tragic suffering and death soon to come upon their Lord and Master.

The revelations belonging to this passage must have been just as difficult to receive. Their lives for some years had known the comfort of His companionship and fellowship. He had been their leader as well as their defense. His presence among them had given to life a richness and fullness and hope it could not have otherwise known. That all their prospects centering in His leadership should be so suddenly shattered seemed to them impossible. The very wording of the Master's message provoked them to amazement. That the very thing they dreaded, against which all their desires had been marshalled, should be pronounced by Him as the most expedient thing that could come to them seemed so strange. The record does not give account of any reply on the part of the disciples to these words of their Lord. Perhaps they were held by them in speechless wonder.

Human nature is fundamentally the same in all generations. It seems entirely reasonable to us that at such a time the disciples must have asked themselves quite seriously the question, what has the Lord meant to us in these more than three years that we have journeyed with Him, listened to Him, and been part and parcel of His marvelous ministry?

Perhaps they thought of that first miracle in Cana of Galilee. It was a wedding feast. The maker of that feast seemed about to be humiliated. The wine had given out. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill up the water pots with water." That having been done, He bade the maker of the feast to draw out now and bear to the governor. The governer made answer, saying, "Thou hast saved the good wine until now." They found in that event that they needed Jesus in the pleasures and festivities of life. There is no place worth going we can not ask Him to accompany us to. There is no pleasure worth seeking we may not sincerely ask Him to share. There is no relationship we ought willingly to sustain we can not ask His smile upon.

It may be that they thought of Him as the great physician and miracle worker. The New Testament record speaks again and again on this wise, "He healed all that were sick." "As many as touched Him were made perfectly whole." No case was too difficult for His diagnosis, no condition so complicated as that He could not work a perfect cure. The blind received their sight. The deaf were made to hear. The lame were healed. The palsied were delivered. The lepers were cleansed. The dead were raised to life again. Marvelous ministry of the marvelous Christ wrought in the presence of His disciples and before the vision of multitudes!

They may have thought of their experience on the Sea of Galilee. They were passengers in a boat. One of those storms which sometimes so suddenly sweep Lake Galilee came upon them. Their boat was rocked by the rude hand of the tempest. It looked as though the ship with its passengers was doomed. Jesus was asleep in the bottom of the vessel. Greatly fearing, and yet with a measure of faith prompting, they went down into the vessel to awaken Him out of sleep. They seemed to chide Him with their questionings. There is a bit of petulance in the words, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" He arose out of sleep, rebuked their lack of faith, and then with calm authority said to the storm

and tempest and surging sea, "Peace, be still." The winds went to their retreats and the waves lay down in quietude at His feet. The disciples marveled and said, "Even the winds and the waves obey His voice." They found out that they needed Jesus on the storm swept sea.

Or it may be that they thought, and John especially, of the hour through which they had just passed, when at the table of the Lord He reclined upon the bosom of Jesus, gazed up into His face, caught the love look of His eye, heard sympathy whisper in His voice and forgot all the heart aches and disappointments through which he had come. Self denial, the persecutions of the people, seemed strangely to lose their sting in the glory of an hour when to John the Beloved was given the privilege of pillowing his head upon the bosom of the Son of God.

How strange, therefore, the announcement of the text. With what difficulty did the disciples come to see the necessity for the expedient ascension of Jesus in the light of the enrichment which had come to their own lives by His presence and ministry. Several reasons might be assigned for the necessary ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father, for it is that going away about which He speaks, but when we have given attention to two of those reasons our purpose for that part of the message shall have been met. One of the reasons is clearly stated in the words of the text. The other is just as certainly implied.

The ascension of Jesus was necessary in order to a completion of His own mediatorial work. He came on redemptive mission. He came to seek man in his lostness and to save man from his sin. No conception, I think, that neglects this fact can explain the mission of His coming from the Father or the mystery of His going back to the Father. With the redemption of a world as the result of such a mission, the incarnation, the sacrifice and the ascension of Jesus have full explanation.

We feel more and more restraint on the tendency to speak any word that would array class against class. The test of civilization and the test of Christianity in the decades that are ahead of us will be the ability to find a way for classes to come to mutual understanding and for races to cooperate on the basis of a real brotherhood. It is true nevertheless that Jesus was born among the poor. There is a tender reference to the early days of the childhood of Jesus we do well to note. It is said that when His mother came to the temple for purification in keeping with a well established custom, she offered pigeons or doves. It is entirely probable that had the family of Mary belonged to what we call the ordinarily well to do, the great middle class, she should have offered in sacrifice on that eventful day a lamb or a kid. She made no such offering because she was too poor to make it. Jesus was born in one of the poorest of Galilee's peasant homes. There is room in His heart for the thronging masses of the poor in all generations and among all peoples. Their needs lie upon His heart a weary load. Their scattered and oppressed conditions lead Him to look upon them as sheep without a shepherd. The Christ of Galilee is walking in the way of the burdened masses of all lands and saying as of yore "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

He went about doing good. That was not the response of an hour. It was the program of His life. He did not find some unusually appealing condition which called forth a ministry of helpfulness. Need was always about Him and virtue was always going out from Him because of the touch of the crowd upon Him. He walked twenty miles across the country to meet a funeral procession and give back to a widowed mother her only son. It was just like Him to do it. He is, in His purpose of helpfulness, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. He comes when burdens are greatest. He appears when night is darkest. He has a genius for coming upon the scene when loads are about to crush and when hope has all but fled.

Jesus taught as never man taught. We have been impressed over and over with how He made profound and weighty truth clear by appeal to simplest illustration. One of the most difficult truths the world of men has undertaken to learn is that there is a God of love, a God who sympathizes, one who cares. Jesus talked to shepherds one day and wanted to make that truth clear. He said it is illustrated by a shepherd who had ninety and nine sheep safe in the fold. Just one was out exposed to danger and perhaps to death. The shepherd numbered those that were safely sheltered and then His compassionate heart went out in tender longing for the one lost sheep. The darkness of the night could not hinder Him. The rage of storm and tempest could not prevent Him. He went to seek the sheep that was astray.

"And none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry
Sick and helpless and ready to die."

But He sought it till He found it and bore it back in the embrace of His own arms to the refuge of the fold. This is like the love of God when Jesus preaches about it. I wish He would teach me how to preach on the love of God.

With great desire did the Master long that men should understand the willingness of God to forgive. He said it was illustrated by a father who had two sons. The younger came to him with a request that he be given the portion of the family estate belonging to him. His father granted his request. The young man left home and journeyed to a far country. In company with prodigal companions he spent his substance in riotous and careless living. There came a famine in that land. The young man away from home was brought to dire necessity and want. Driven by

the emergencies of the case, he gave himself in employ to one of the men of the country and was sent to one of the most loathsome tasks a young man could know—that of feeding swine at a herd pen. So hungry did he become that he fain would have filled himself with the husks provided for the swine and no man gave him to eat. In the midst of need like that the young man remembered that in his father's house was plenty and to spare. He resolved to go back home. He purposed to tell his father that he had sinned against heaven and in his sight and that he was no more worthy to be called his son. He was going to ask the father to make him as a hired servant. The father had been gazing down the way the young man went across the months, it may have been for several years. Lights in the windows of home had been kept burning through many a night. Love's keen vision had scanned the horizon across the days. The father beheld the returning son when he was yet a great way off. Love's discernment was accurate. He knew him. He ran to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him. The young man began to say, "I have sinned" and the father answered, "Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet and a robe on his shoulder." The young man protested, "I am not worthy to be called thy son," and the father answered, "Kill the fatted calf and enter into celebration. My son that was lost is found. My son that was dead is alive." That is like the willingness of the Father to forgive. That is how the Father restores to confidence and love and spiritual abundance the wandering child that comes back in penitence and contrition. I am going to ask Jesus to teach me how to preach on the willingness of God to forgive.

Jesus lived as never man lived. The greatest of men have their limitations. The wisest of men make mistakes. Bishop Henry W. Warren a good many years ago called attention to the fact that Jesus never had to make apology, never had to recall a hasty utterance; did not find it necessary to ask either God or man for forgiveness. He did al-

ways the things which pleased the Father. Whether He spoke the word of gracious invitation or withering rebuke, God could say of Him, "This is my well beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He was the perfect, the crystal Christ. He was harmless, holy, separate from sinners, and undefiled. We bow in His presence nor feel any sense of condemnation for idolatrous worship. He is Son of God and Son of Man.

Our salvation does not rest in the fact that Jesus was born among the poor, that He went about doing good nineteen hundred years ago, that He was in His person the Truth and in His ministry, the world's greatest teacher of truth. We are not saved because He lived a perfect example. Faith and scriptural fact agree in the statement that Christ died for our sins. We are a redeemed race. We have been purchased not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus. Sacrificial redemption is the heart of Gospel emphasis. It is one of the great, essential, distinctive Christian facts. On the cross Jesus completed the ministry of sacrifice. He could say, and the world has not ceased to re-echo His words, "It is finished."

When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father he began the ministry of intercession. That ministry is being accomplished now. He is our Advocate, our Mediator. It is a comforting thought that He who wore the garments of our flesh, who walked in the ways of man, met the temptations to which we are exposed, now represents us before the throne of the divine majesty. He is one with us. The language he uses has a human accent for He is the son of Mary. There whispers in His voice sympathy born of tragic suffering and agony for He was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The mystery of the divine, the human Christ, holds us perpetually.

We have somewhere read a story out of that life so fruitful of illustrations, the life of Abraham Lincoln. There is such a romance about the life and labors of the

great Lincoln that we do not vouch for the details of the story. We simply give them as we remember to have read them. During the Civil War when things were going hard with the Union army, there was encamped just outside the city of Washington an army unit. So many were the perils, so imminent the dangers which threatened the capital city as that there came from army headquarters to that unit an order that there were to be no more furloughs. Every man was to be at his place continually. A young man belonging to that unit received a letter from home saying that his wife was slowly but surely dying of an incurable disease. He took the letter to one of his superior officers who read its contents. The officer sympathized with him but told him of the order which had come from headquarters, and said to him that the only thing he could do was to give him a day's leave of absence and let him present his case to the President at the white house. He took this one way of hope. Traveling into the city he made his way to the white house and found every entrance closely guarded and was told over and over that no one could see the President that day except those who had made previous engagment with him. Discouraged and grief stricken he turned away and was found by a lad a little while later weeping as though with broken heart. The lad asked him why he was weeeping and finally he elicited from the man the story of the sick wife. the army order, and the disappointments through which he had just passed in his efforts to see the President. The lad said to him, "Come with me and I will get you to the President." The soldier asked him what he could do, a lad such as he. The reply came with assurance, "Come with me and I will get you to the President." The lad led the soldier past white house guards and into a reception room. In a little while the great President bowed a man out of his presence and an office door swung open. The lad said "Father". Mr. Lincoln replied, "Come in, Tad." Tad Lincoln, the son of the President, took the soldier by the hand and brought him into the presence of his father. The soldier made known his mission, received from the

President, the commander-in-chief of the Union army, his furlough and went home to look into the face of his dying loved one.

We were away from God. Ours was an alienation caused by guilty choice. We could not find our way back again. Jesus Christ came in the mystery of incarnation to Bethlehem's manger. He grew up a lad in a Galilean home. He entered into His life mission under the anointing of the Spirit of God . We do not understand it. Its philosophy is too deep for our comprehension, but by some effective way He gets humanity by the hand, brings us through closed doors, past moral barriers, into the very presence of God where we may make known our wants and receive from Him the answer to the heart's deepest longings. Thus does Jesus consummate His glorious work as Mediator between God and man.

The second revelation of the text is that the ascension, glorification, and exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of the Father were necessary in order to the Spirit's coming in dispensational fullness to the world. The putting of the text is, "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." We are again in the presence of mystery. We are not able to explain why this is true. The economy which incorporates such conditions is beyond us. We rejoice in the wealthy fact that through the intercession of Jesus the Spirit has come, dispensationally, epochally, savingly upon man.

That fact argues as forcefully as any fact could argue it, the supreme deity of our Lord. Only an infinite giver can make an infinite gift. Jesus being exalted by God, and having shed forth the Holy Spirit in the plenitude of his grace, is an infinite giver.

Dr. S. A. Keen, one of the most radiant and fruitful pastor-evangelists American Methodism has produced, was accustomed to saying that the Holy Spirit poured upon the waiting church is the coronation gift of the King of Kings

to His bride. The Spirit is the inclusive gift of Jesus to the church. It is He who makes the church an organism and who gives to the organizations of the church their dynamic for service.

We are interested, however, not so much in the dispensation of the Spirit as in the epochal coming and manifestation of the Spirit to the hearts of individual belivers. Four words, rightly understood, will serve to compass the meaning of the Spirit's coming to the disciples of Jesus. These words are purity, fullness, permamency, and universality. When he comes it is to purify, to fill the soul with His own love and presence, to abide in the life the source of perpetual victory. And He comes to every heart who makes preparation for His coming.

We have indicated that the Spirit comes to purify the soul. That was the meaning of the prophetic promise. Malachi said, "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

John the Baptist, a fore-runner indeed, said, "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire, whose fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His floor and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, but gather the wheat into the garner." There is need for a bit of care in the use of scriptural symbolry. The burning of the chaff has no reference to the judgments poured out upon the wicked. The tares that were gathered in bundles and burned represent the destruction of the wicked. The chaff is mixed with the wheat, clings to the wheat, discounts the value and use of the wheat. In fact we may have wheat so mixed with chaff as that it largely loses its value. If the chaff were winnowed away and the wheat were sown in the fields, it would spring up to normal harvest. Or if the wheat were placed on the market, it would bring regular market value.

We are not unkind when we say that there are people

rich in the capacity for usefulness in whom there is such a mixture of the chaff of frivolous thinking and careless living as that they largely lose their influence. If God could have His way with them and separate from them the light and chaffy, He would bring them to a service regal and splendid.

Cast iron slabs break easily. They have that which is breakable in their very makeup. If they are put under the test of fire until they will make steel rails or, better still watch springs, they will bend but endure.

We have had that which was brittle and breakable in our very make-up. God calls us to the test of fire. He wants to take away the alloy, the counterfeit, the gross and bring us to a heart condition where, under temptations and tests, we shall have the qualities of spiritual endurance. He comes to purify, to cleanse the nature. That ministry of the Spirit is fundamental and essential.

The Spirit reveals Himself in fullness. It makes little difference what direction we think that fullness takes. We may say it is a full revelation of the divine person, meeting the promise, "He is with you: He shall be in you." We may think it is the fullness of heart capacity, satisfying the command Paul made to the Ephesians, "Be filled with the Spirit." Or we may conclude that it is the fullness of joy, enabling us to realize the truth of the Master's words, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy may remain in you and that your joy might be full." It makes little difference. The message comes to us with its assurance of sufficency, of enoughness.

The offer of abundance which nature illustrates is impressive. The majesty and strength of the mountains, the vast expanse of the plains, the tideless, tossing, sobbing sea; all these are given voices to proclaim the abundance of divine grace. The God of rugged mountain and verdured plain and fathomless sea is the God who forgives, who cleanses, who fills and keeps. We need not go hungry, there is a divine supply. We need not be fruitless, there

is a life more abundant. We need not be defeated, there is victory constant and complete through the resources of grace. The hunger of man is not greater than the willingness of God. The capacity of man is not larger than the provisions of God. The cry of man will not fail an answer from God.

The New Testament gives to the presence of the Spirit the promise of permanency. Jesus, in the likeness of man, was refused, rejected, condemend and crucified. Men could take Him from the garden of Gethsemane to the palace of the high priest, to Pilate's hall, to Herod's court before Pontius Pilate again, and then outside the walls of Jerusalem to death, even the shameful death of the cross. Men may reject the ministry of the Spirit. They cannot nail Him to a tree. They are not able to steal Him out of the hearts of the faithful followers of Jesus. He will abide despite the misunderstandings of men, the unbelief of multitudes about us, or the opposition of all our foes. Blessed Spirit, live forever to make our hearts Thy home.

The gift of the Spirit is made universal to the church on the grounds of consecration and faith. In our own day of superior light there are many who seems to think that the only people who were filled with the Holy Ghost on the first Pentecost were the disciples or apostles of Jesus. A careful reading will reval that there were about an hundred and twenty in that illustrious company. The women were there. Mary Magdalene, out of whom the evil spirits were cast, was no doubt present. Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, we doubt not, waited in that group; Mary quiet as always and meditative; Martha less inclined to haste than on the memorable day when Jesus was in the home and she was busy with much serving. Lazarus, like a visitor from another world, waited for Him who broke the power of death over him, to fill him with the Spirit of life. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, alert, ambitious, alas sometimes scheming for a high place, were in that company with heart doors open and expectant faith.

Peter ,the impetuous, swift to make resolve, quick to break the vow, like the rolling stones, yet with vast capacities which Jesus discerned and which He purposed to utilize when they had been cleansed and organized by the Spirit of God, was there. They were all with one accord in one place and altogether and all alike were filled with the Holy Ghost.

The promise is as universal today. Age may know as a crown of glory, the outpoured Holy Spirit. Fatherhood and Motherhood, with busy hand, puzzled thought, burdened heart, may know and should know the sanctifying presence of the Spirit of God. Youth, with its daring, its wealth of possibility, its eagerness for adventure, its capacity for service, may know the companionshlp and fullness of the Third Person of the Trinity.

How great is the need that it shall be so. We would not put old heads on young shoulders. We would not reverse seasons of a life any more than we would undertake to reverse the seasons of the year. But there are unseasonable visitations and losses in the spiritual realm just as certainly as there are in the physical realm which only the grace of God can prevent. Floods of passion may destroy the souls of this generation of young people just as surely as floods sweep the Mississippi valley or the mountain courses of Vermont and Kentucky. We would not rob youth of legitimate pleasure. We would say to youth that life has its serious aspect. Even religion has in it elements that are transcendent and stern. There is back of the religion of the Bible the lightning and thunder of Sinai's quaking mountain, Gethsemane's bloody sweat, and Calvary's tragic heartbreak. We cannot make Gethsemane a garden of fountains and flowers nor Golgotha's mountain a summer park.

There is in all of this the invasion of the divine earnestness and intensity. Men, not even young men, may pass these things by indifferently. The Holy Spirit would guard the innocency of the young and make all life fragrant, fruitful, rich and true.

We wait for a moment to name scriptural conditions for the coming of the Spirit in fullness. Jesus said "Tarry ye until ye be endued with power from on high." We are sure that the supreme emphasis here is not on time spent in some place of waiting. It is rather the soul taking time to get its attitude correctly. When the gift of the Spirit is the most desired gift heaven offers, when the enduement of the Spirit is to the heart the most important preparation it may know, when the Spirit himself is more desired than any other gifts His coming brings, when passion for His coming is deeper than the desire for pleasure or gain or power of place, then He will make no tarrying. He will come quickly and His temple fill.

Beyond the quest of the soul, the outgoing of the heart in intensity of desire, there comes a time when nothing is required but simple appropriation. We do not labor to bring the light in through eastern windows in the morning. We open shutters and push up window blinds and quickly the room is flooded with light. We do not climb some hill and face toward the rising of the sun and pour out creaturely struggle in an effort to get the orb of day to start forth on his journey. We climb the hill, face toward the east, and let the sun rise in glory and majesty.

It is not by struggle. It is not by groans nor yet by our tears that we bring the Spirit in Pentecostal, sanctifying fullness into our lives. We make Him welcome and like sparks from smitten steel, so quickly does He make His presence real in the heart that waits for His coming.

"The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

A Spiritual Prince

A SPIRITUAL PRINCE

"And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." GENESIS 32:28.

These words express the sovereign purpose of Jehovah concerning the patriarch Jacob. They require for their full interpretation the history of Jacob's life lying back of the crisis to which they belong. Jacob was the last born of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca. Before the birth of the sons it had been made known to the mother that the older should serve the younger. They were different in temperaments. Esau was a bold hunter and roamed the fields. He was the favorite of his father Isaac. Jacob was a plain man and dwelt in tents. He was peculiary loved by his mother.

By a shrewd piece of planning, Jacob purchased from Esau the birthright which belonged to him as the older of the two sons. Aided by Rebecca, his mother, he practised a still shrewder piece of deception upon Isaac and secured the patriarchal blessing so much valued in that far off day. It was in the thought of God that Jacob should receive that blessing but we are under no obligations to believe that God sanctioned all the means that were employed for securing it. Right things may be sought by wrong methods. The anger of Esau was aroused at the unfair treatment he had recived at the hands of his brother and he secretly asserted his intention of taking the life of Jacob so soon as the days of mourning for his father, whose death appeared close at hand, should be accomplished. The mother learning of this secret purpose, found an excuse for requesting Isaac to send Jacob to the house of her brother Laban of Padan-aram.

As Jacob journeyed from the home of his parents to

the land of his mother's relatives, opportunites such as he had never known before were furnished him for facing the facts belonging to human existence. He tarried for a night at a place called Luz, afterward named Bethel. There God made revelations to him and brought him into covenant relation with Himself. As he slept with his head upon a a stone, he visioned in the night a ladder resting upon the earth with its top reaching to heaven. Angels ascended and descended. The Lord stood above the ladder and made promise that He would be with Jacob and that He would bring him again into the land where he now found shelter and that in him and in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. Jacob awakened to acknowledge the presence of the Lord and to make solemn vows that the Lord should be his God. He felt that the place where the Lord had met him was a temple holy, and promised to the Lord the tribute of a loyal devotion in the faithful giving of the tithe.

Our text finds him, after twenty checkered and tumultuous years, in another crisis. He has separated from Laban, his father-in-law, and with flocks and herds, wives and childern, and servants, he is on his way back to the land of his father. Memory recalls to him the treatment he had given to his brother twenty years before. The wrong of it and the guilt of it still rest upon his conscience. He wonders if time has healed the wound which his deceptive treatment brought to Esau. He sends messengers to know the temper of his brother. They return to announce to him that Esau's anger is seemingly unappeased and that he is even now marching to meet him with four hundred armed men. It was a time of crisis, bringing Jacob quickly to a sense of his dire extremity.

Larger in significance than the human factors which enter into this epochal experience of an Old Testament character are the besetments of the divine purpose. God wants more than the right of ownership in the life of Jacob. He wants that he shall be a prince in His kingdom. He

desires more than covenant relations such as were established when He met Jacob at Bethel. He wants to bring the patriarch to spiritual supremacy where he shall prevail in intercession with God and in influence with men. He is not content that Jacob shall be conscious simply of the presence of God and sensible of the forgiveness and protection of God. He purposes a radical and thorough change in his nature that shall transform him from Jacob, the supplanter, into Israel, the man of God. It is out of these reflections that we get the theme under consideration.

While there may be dispensational limitations, the fundamental conditions for victory have been the same in all the ages. If we find the path over which the aspiring of soul have traveled to spiritual royalty and certainty in other days, we shall have discovered the way necessary for us to take in our day if we would know God's best. The analogy between Jacob's crisis at Peniel and the New Testament believers entrance into the experience of Christian holiness is very striking.

The Soul's Quest

Let us inquire of the human approach to the experience with which this text has to do. If we discern closely we shall see that several steps are necessary in the quest of the soul for the fullness of blessing. The first was a recognition of the soul's utter dependence upon God. That fact was forced upon Jacob by the very dangers that he faced. Esau, with anger unabated, was coming to meet him. Four hundred men stood ready to give themselves for the avenging of the wrong Jacob had visited upon his brother and for carrying out any counsels of wrath Esau might urge. Gone now was the shrewd plans of a fond mother. Far removed is every sort of refuge in native cunning or trickery. No hope of assistance is offered by those from whom he has so recently separated, for Jacob had left Laban, his father-in-law, under conditions that were not calculated to inspire sympathy and help. Every human

hope must be abandoned. In the presence of such an emergency Jacob cried out, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." It was over a road like that, rough, rugged, and lonely, that Jacob came to a sense of complete dependence upon God.

We may come to such a crisis by a different way. Problems we cannot solve and providences we cannot explain may demand that the soul depend upon God or come to despair. It may be that in moments of spiritual illumination we discover heart conditions within that we are as powerless to change as is the leopard his spots or the Ethiopian his skin. The problems of his own heart and life provoked Paul to say, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He would have been forced to the same query had he viewed the landscape o'er. God alone can cast out the inward foe. Only divine power can change the nature of man. Only as we come to Him are we sure of the solution of those problems that have to do with our inner experiences and character.

The second step of Jacob toward a spiritual prince was heart consecration. That is a step in advance of recognition of dependence upon God. The first was prompted by a deep sense of hopelessness. This betokens a complete devotion to God in order that God's will may be done in God's way. Whether the soul be conscious of it or not, that kind of a consecration is made in complete accord with the soul's estimate of the worth of the things given up. It was so with Jacob. First, there were sent over the brook Jabbok flocks and herds, then servants, then Leah and her children, and last of all Rachel and Joseph, the very idols of his heart. There was a reckoning with

himself after that, but so far as human help or human companionship were concerned, from that time on Jacob wrestled alone.

This battle of the soul at the Jabbok of consecration will be fought out in every life at one or two crucial points. A companion, a life plan, the promise of reward or preferment, some final thing, perhaps dear as a foot or a hand or an eye, will have to be given up, cut off, cast away. Or it may be a desire for ease, an unwillingness to sacrifice and suffer, even for Jesus' sake. The softness of our day is strikingly out of harmony with the sacrifice and self-denial of the first Christian century. We may so betray the Man of Sorrows in our unwillingness to take the way of the cross as that we seem to mock Him when we sing,

> *"Must Jesus bear the cross alone,*
> *And all the world go free?*
> *No, there's a cross for everyone,*
> *And there's a cross for me."*

We may come to mansions and to a social or moneyed aristocracy by other means, but this is the only way to become spiritual princes in the kingdom of God.

The third step in the approach of Jacob toward God is seen in his cry for the knowledge of the character of God. That is the significance of his words when he asks, "What is Thy name?" He was not asking, as we would seem to be doing in making such an inquiry today, if God's name was Jehovah as distinguished from Baal or some other heathen deity. The God of Abraham and Isaac, the God who had met Jacob at Bethel, had no competition in the worship of his soul. The word "name" stands in this connection for character or likeness. Jacob was saying, "I want to know Thy nature. I want to know what Thou art like." That cry discovers to us a soul who has sounded the depths of spiritual aspiration. It seems to us that

there is included here not merely a desire to see Him, a longing to behold Him as He is in character, but a passion to be like Him. If to Jacob is vouchsafed a vision of God as He is, then to him shall belong a purpose to partake of His likeness. We are reminded of how the heart of Moses was kindled to the same desire when he cried, "Show me Thy glory."

A devotion like this revealed in the life of one who lived four thousand years ago shames the shallow spirituality of our day that spends its energy largely in announcements of mere platitudes and in promoting mere humanitarian schemes. There is no knowledge comparable to the knowledge of Him. There is no possibility within the reach of the soul of such importance as that which belongs to bearing His likeness.

A final step in the quest of Jacob after Jehovah is revealed in soul determination or resolution to receive the divine blessing. He cried out, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." There are elements of agony and suffering back of this expression of purpose that a casual reading of this passage will not reveal. Back of it were the wrestlings of a whole night. What memories of past wrong doing. What convicting sense of inward impurities. What discoveries of human impotency as the hours dragged wearily by. Every human support has failed him. All human strength is wasted. Nothing avails now but the resolution of the soul to lay hold of and to hold on to God and faith in the divine sufficiency. That was enough. That was an Old Testament illustration of a New Testament fact "that the kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent take it by force."

Need I remind you that there is that which corresponds to a night of wrestling before the dawning of a day of power for every child of God? To some it will sound like a story out of the mythical, the fabled past. To others it will seem so unnecessary, so unreal. But I

have a feeling that there are those who read these words who aspire to man's highest and God's best. There are those with whom the dawning of such a morning as that to which Jacob came shall be recompense for the gathering of the shadows of yesterday's night; with whom the revealing of the Father's face is full reward for the struggle of night watches; to whom a nature fully renewed in the image of God is the most prized possession. I speak to you! I appeal to you! The hour of victory is at hand.

The Divine Response

We have indicated to you some of the steps in the way over which Jacob came into the very presence of God. We must not fail to remind you that God was found of him. The limitation of much christian biography lies in the fact that it simply describes the struggles of the soul after victory and leaves out the account of God's response. The prayer of sincere longing never found heaven silent. No soul that earnestly sought Him has ever found God listless and indifferent. I have elsewhere called this the besetment of the divine purpose. Let me see if I can express even a part of its signifcance.

God wraps Jacob about with a reverent sense of the infinite. Frederick W. Robertson suggests that it is not a mere accident that this struggle is described as having occurred in the night. Darkness is a figure pointing to profound fact. It suggest that all the mysteries of the being are not known, that the soul stands in the presence of realities too deep for human understanding and that the mind of man cannot search all the attributes of the divine being. The night is a teacher concerning things of God in ways that the day can not be. The light of day brings acquaintance with the things of earth. It shows us things nearby: the ant on the walk, the fly on the screen, the house across the street, or the hill in full view yonder. But when the sun becomes conscious of his limitations as a teacher and hides his face, we are in the presence of the Infinite:

Infinite space, brooding silence, the march of the star's the orderly progress of worlds. We run in the day and toil in the day, but the night calls to reverence and worship. So does the soul stand in awe, shadowed and sheltered in the presence of mystery.

God brings revelations in the midst of spiritual night that we can get in no other way. Out of the providence we could not explain, the sorrow we did not understand, the loss for which we had no return , He has brought us to a dependence upon Him and to a rest in Him we should not have found by other ways. We have read somewhere of a bird who was taken for his song. He was brought into a beautiful home and his cage was hung near an eastern window. He was bathed by the first rays of light that came o'er eastern hills. Flowers were banked about him. There was every inducement to sing but he gave no song. Effort after effort was made to call forth the song from the the heart of the bird but he sat day by day silent and songless. At last in desperation his cage was wrapped about with black crepe. In the shadows which the crepe produced the bird sang as with full heart and bursting throat. So God sometimes has to bring us to the time of darkness, to find us in our deepest need and to call from us the song of praise out of hearts of gratitude.

The twentieth century sometimes worries me. We know so much. We explain things so easily. We smile away the gloom of the world's sin. We unravel all the hidden secrets of the soul and providence. The scientists, some of them, know all about the laws of nature. The psychologists relieve us of anything difficult about the workings of the human mind. The philosophers give full explanation of first causes and final effects. The theologians bring the doctrine of redemption down to alphabetical simplicity. When we come to where we can explain everything, we become talkative and noisy. It is not thus that spiritual princes are made. The devout soul is acquainted with God but he does not know all about God.

The immanence, yea more, the Fatherhood of God, moves the cleansed heart to gratitude, but the transcendence, the greatness of God holds that heart to reverence. The soul is made great by the invasion of the infinite. We have with us the ministry of wonder. It was with this atmosphere of awe and reverence that God compassed Jacob about.

Jehovah did not leave the patriarch possessed with reverence only. In answer to Jacob's question ,"What is thy name" God gave to Jacob such a revelation of the holiness and majesty of his own being as that when he in turn asked of Jacob the same question, "What is thy name", Jacob was able to answer correctly. His name then took on significance. It became an outward characterization of an inward condition. What Jacob literally said was "My name is supplanter. I am the trickster of the household of Isaac. I am he of the shrewd business dealing with Laban." That was confession. That was acknowledging the plague of the nature, the warp of the soul. That was a faithful confession of the unlikeness of his character to that of the unknown Wrestler.

We discover here a principle fundamental to soul victory. There are convictions we cannot express. There are longings we cannot word. But there are no heart conditions God will not change when the confession is full Our resolves may not avail. Our purposes to do a little better may not aid. But when we confess our need to him, He assumes responsibility for us and does for us and in us that which we cannot possibly do for ourselves.

God yields himself to the embrace of a great faith. He who had wrestled Jacob into the consciousness of complete dependence, past the altar of entire consecration, into the depths of intense heart longing and into resolution of soul to be divinely blessed, is now held in the arms of a great personal trust. He will not break the clasp of the hands of faith. He will not flee the embrace of his own.

What obligations faith places upon God. What persuasion to action it makes. It is the implicit trust of childhood looking into the face of fatherhood. It is helplessness waiting on infinite power. It is poverty pleading at the door of wealth. It is hunger crying at a table richly spread. It is loneliness asking for companionship. It is guilt pleading for pardon. It is soul uncleanness seeking for purity. It is an immortal soul crying out in the ears of a righteous God, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

The Morning Breaketh

Like sunshine after rain, like a morning of quiet after a night of storm, like springtime after winter, like like peace after conflict, so came victory to Jacob after a night of struggle. Two passages celebrate the triump. We read, "He blessed him there." And again, "Thou hast prevailed."

The blessing of that hour meant a change from Jacob to Israel. It meant a spiritual exaltation to become a prince in the house of God. Looking back over his career when he was old, Israel lifted two stones of witnessing. He said, in Genesis 48:3, that God appeared unto him in Luz and blessed him. In the 16th verse of the same chapter he speaks of his Peniel experience after the night of struggle and calls the unknown Wrestler "the angel that redeemed me from all inquity."

"Thou hast prevailed." Prevail he did with Esau on the morrow. Not by gifts, not by shrewd planning, and not by meeting armed men with armed men. He prevailed by appearing in the morning with the dew upon his locks, his own strength gone, and yet with the glory and beauty of the Lord upon him. Esau beheld him and wept. He could not attack him whom God had robed with the garments of purity.

This is the hope of the church today. When the dew of the morning is upon the brow of the church that has prayed through night watches and the glory of the Lord is shining upon a church that has seen God face to face, the world will weep and acknowledge the sway of the cross. We conquer not by our human energy and ingenuity but by the likeness we possess to our Lord.

And prevail Jacob did with God. He lived across many years of service and devotion. He had his heart torn with disappointments and losses. He was often and deeply grieved by the perfidy and deception of his own household, but he walked with God, and when the time of his departure was at hand the Lord lifted him up into a high mountain of prophecy and gave him vision of coming glories in the day of the Lord and of the triumphs which should be achieved by Israel's future Deliverer, and he prophesied, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a law giver from between his feet until Shiloh come and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

The Indwelling Christ

THE INDWELLING CHRIST

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;" — EPHESIANS 3:17.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." — COLLOSIANS 1:27.

Divine revelation, like the path of the just, shineth more and more until it merges into the light of an unclouded day. Attention to the promises of God will show clearly the truth of this statement. When Adam and Eve passed from the garden of Eden under the guilt of their first disobedience, they were given the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In that veiled and shadowed promise, God was announcing his entrance into the spiritual conflicts of the race and giving assurance of the victory that should certainly result. In the last chapter of the Book of Revelation there is given a universal invitation which reads, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The purpose of God for man's provisional redemption has been met. The way of life has ben opened unto all who will. The invitation to partake of the healing, life-giving streams is given. Between these two announcements — the one dim but positive and certain, the other rich, clear and full — are ages and dispensations.

Our text announces one of the most profound themes of New Testament revelation. There is in it a truth made clear only after Calvary with its sacred story had become an historic fact and the outpoured Spirit in Pentecostal fullness an abiding experience in the church of Jesus. God has come increasingly close to man as the dispensations have succeeded each other. In the dispensation of the Father, God was shown to be accessible. He was holy but He was also compassionate and full of pity. His eye ran to and fro in the earth that He might show Himself strong in behalf of them whose hearts were perfect toward Him.

The saints of old walked with Him, had the divine pleasure upon them, and had testimony while living of the Father's delight. During the dispensation of the Son God came down to men. A seeking love, forgiving grace, a devotion that prompted to healing helpful ministries were made known. The dispensation of the Spirit enlarges and glorifies the thought of an accessible deity, of a God that can be approached and with whom we can have blessed fellowship. The ministry of the Spirit sets on high the mission of the Son of God as He seeks and woos and loves even unto death. But an advance step is taken in the Spirit's dispensation. God is not only accessible to us. He is not only in the person of His Son, Emmanuel—God with us; He wants to live in us. The resurrected, the glorified, the living Christ has chosen our hearts for His home, our souls for the temple of His own indwelling. That is a truth profound in meaning and rich in spiritual suggestion. It is the theme of this hour.

I have indicated that the divine indwelling is peculiarly a privilege belonging to the present, the Spirit's dispensation. Let me return now to say that the Spirit is uniquely the agent of this enthronement of Christ in the human heart. He prepares the heart for the divine abode. He strengthens with might in the inner man that Christ may dwell in the heart. We shall not undertake to search the whole reach of that ministry of strengthening and preparation which the Spirit accomplishes. Three observations will be sufficient.

He intensifies the soul's desire. Throughout the Word of God strong emphasis is placed on the intensity of human longing. God is moved by the deep yearnings of the soul. The word of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah was, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty. I will pour floods upon the dry ground." God wistfully looks for those whose hearts are as thirsty lands crying out for the streams. On hearts that feel such needs and acknowledge such longings will the Lord of Hosts pour floods of waters. Jesus clothed

this same truth in a beatitude when He said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." When God finds a man whom the Spirit has quickened into such a longing for living bread as that it may be really called spiritual hunger, if he can find a soul with such pantings for the springs of water as that it may indeed be named thirst, His promise is, "They shall be filled." The young lions may lack and suffer hunger when no table is spread in nature's solitudes but that sort of a righteous man shall not be forsaken and the spiritual seed of a man like that shall never beg for the bread of heaven.

The temple of man's soul is renovated and made ready for the divine abode by the Holy Spirit. A sacred regard was held for the temple made with hands by Old Testament worthies. The temple furniture was conscientiously set apart for sacred use, and the temple structure was supposed to be the place where God's honor dwelt. The presence of Jehovah gave to it a hallowed, sacred significance that no other place possessed. It was there God revealed Himself to His people. The plaintiff cry of the Psalmist. "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." was a cry of longing for the worship and revelation that had been his in the ancient temple. The New Testament makes known God's desire for the human heart as His temple. No longer does He place unique emphasis on sacred buildings, mountains or cities as the place of His revelation. The temple for His indwelling is the soul of man. He would make that temple holy and sacred by divine habitation. If He is to come in it must be an undefiled temple. The Apostle writing to the Corinthian church, said. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "If any man defile the temple of God him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." This temple is made holy by the sanctifying ministry of the Spirit himself. It is thus prepared as the home for deity.

The Spirit enlarges soul capacity. He strengthens for the divine indwelling by an enlargement of heart. I am not yielding to a cynical censure when I say that we are not visited by the abundant blessings of the Lord because we do not make room for His blessings. If I were to make a promise of a gift, not much preparation would be necessary for its reception. You could meet me on your front porch and easily receive whatever I had to offer. It is not so with God. The Lord does not ask for adornment of the temple of the soul. He will adorn it when He Himself fully possesses it. He wants room. He does not demand that the temple shall be golden but He wants an open door, the keys to all the rooms and complete right of way. Some one has put this truth in figurative language by saying that if you want Him to come in, you must dig the cellar deeper, push out the walls and lift up the roof. It is not the number of talents nor the richness which comes with years of service that He seeks as He stands at the door of the heart, but that largeness which results from utter abandonment of will and purpose to Him. No more surely was there no room found for Jesus in the inn on that memorable night of His birth of the virgin than that He is kept out of the heart of many of His professed followers today by that lack of generous welcome which is only given when consecration is complete and the soul's desire for the fullness of God is undivided.

We find in the text the method of the indwelling suggested. The Revised Version rendering is, "That Christ may take up His abode in your hearts." Two truths rich in content are suggested in these words: the instantaneousness, the immediateness of His coming into the heart that invites, and the permanency of His abiding.

One of the greatest difficulties we face is in arriving at a balanced putting of truth. With many of us there seems to be a natural inclination to extremes. When looking at truth we see just one side or, in estimating the weight of any particular truth, we forget companion truths that are just

as important. Nowhere is this tendency more clearly discerned than in the failure to distinguish between those epochs that belong to the bestowal of grace and those processes that are ordained for the maturing of character under grace.

There is danger in our day that we shall emphasize the processes to the neglect of the epochs. The spirit of the age inclines to such tendency. Much that is being written in the field of evangelism stresses almost wholly that which has to do with the training and development of Christian life and character and leaves little room for the impact of God upon the soul in those high and holy hours of contrition, consecration and faith. There is a sort of general or indefinite teaching which seems to imply that we are always coming toward divine blessing but never quite arriving at a sure possession of such blessing. We are about to be saved from sin but never really get there.

The only thing that delays any grace God offers to the soul is a failure to meet conditions. Child of the world, you can have pardon for all the guilty past this moment if you will meet the simple conditions God's Word imposes. Child of the Kingdom, you can know the purging, empowering, investing baptism with the Holy Spirit just now if you will make a consecration complete and unreserved and exercise an appropriating faith in the meritorious sacrifice of Jesus.

A centurion came to Jesus one day and laid before him in earnest appeal the case of his sick servant. He was marked by a great humility. He said "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word and my servant shall be healed." The Scriptures tell us "that same hour was the servant made whole."

Jacob was on his way from Mesopotamia back to his father's house. He remembered how he had wronged Esau, his brother in a shrewd purchase of his birthright and in securing the patriarchal blessing of Isaac by deception. He tarried at Jabbok's ford. He was alone. There wrest-

led with him a Man through the darkness of the night. When the day was breaking the unknown Wrestler made ready to depart. Jacob, with strength wasted said, "I will not let thee go till thou bless me." And we read, "He blessed him there."

The coming of the Spirit on the first Pentecost was marked in the same epochal fashion. "The day of Pentecost was fully come." That was dispensational. "They were all in one place and with one accord." From the human standpoint that was preparational. "Suddenly there was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

The church of our day will do well to take note of these great epochs. She needs to find a retreat, some upper room of waiting. Her vision, prosperity and success depend upon her remembering that God's skies are full of Pentecosts. Her machinery shall become cumbersome and inactive, her programs shall fall by their own weight, she shall be mocked by her failures, if the church does not remember that it is not by "might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Jesus wants to make the hearts of His children the place of His abode. It does not take Him fifteen years to get down the streets of your spiritual city, or six months to turn the corner, seven weeks to get up the front walk, and ten days to get through the door. Call Him with a complete consecration. Invite Him with a great glad abandon. Welcome Him by a great heart confidence and this hour He will make your heart His home.

The purpose of God claims the heart as a temple for the constant and abiding presence of Jesus. There is admonition in the Scriptures which bids us be kind to strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. At best, the angelic beings at our doors come simply as visitors. They may encamp about us to protect us from danger. They may in some profound spiritual sense, as-

sist in inspiring us to worthy motives and may woo us to paths of safety. They do not, they can not, come into our hearts to live with us.

Lot, the kinsman of Abraham, sat in the gates of Sodom at the eventide. Two men appeared unto him before the gates. He went out unto them and made strong entreaty that they should turn in and abide at his house. They at first seemed unwilling, but after much persuasion entered the home. Lot baked for them unleavened bread and they did eat. Before they sought rest for the night, the men of the city congregated at Lot's door and demanded an explanation for the presence of his visitors. Going outside he entreated the people for the strangers within his gates but they threatened him with even worse treatment than they planned to visit upon the strangers themselves. The visitors reached out and pulled Lot inside the door and the clamoring people on the outside were stricken with blindness. Then the strangers besought Lot and his household to seek safety outside the confines of the wicked city and made known the certain coming of God's judgments upon it. Thus did angel visitors seek the safety of righteous Lot.

Jesus does not want to visit us simply when wickedness increases about us and worldliness is coming in at flood tide. He wants to live with us, to take up His abode in our hearts. He will abide when men have left us to our desolation, when losses overtake us, when sorrows come, when death visits and when the world about us becomes a vale of tears.

The condition of the indwelling is brought to light in the text. The striking language is that "Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." Faith is the standard currency in the merchandise of the Kingdom of God just as gold is our most precious metal. Things are made available to faith that can be had in no other way. It is sometimes difficult for men to see that God rewards confidence

expressed by faith just as certainly as He rewards love expressed by service. We should be saved from doubt as to the possibilities of faith if we kept this truth in mind.

We are saved by faith. The apostle said, "By grace are ye saved through faith and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." When the Philippian jailor asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul answered "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Just as the christian life is begun in faith, so is it continued by the constant exercise of faith. The just walk by faith. We are victors over the world by faith. John said, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." And though we hear a great deal more about processes in most discussions that have to do with the soul's sanctification than we do about the epoch, yet the Scriptures explicitly teach that we are sanctified by faith in Jesus. What human toil can not make our own, what the pouring out of creaturely energy does not bring, faith secures to the soul. We used to sing,

"The saints in all this glorious war
Shall conquer though they die;
They see the triumph from afar
By faith they bring it nigh."

That is gloriously true, but it is also true that by faith we can not only bring personal soul triumph nigh, but we can bring it into our very hearts and lives.

Just as Christ is lifted to the throne of our souls in the arms of a great faith, so does He abide in our souls on condition of continual faith. We may not break the contract of faith and know Him as an abiding Guest. He dwells in our hearts on the easy but necessary terms of constant heart trust. We cannot maintain a rich and helpful friendship on less devotion than the friendship was formed upon. The married relation can not be maintained successfully on a lower love basis than it was former on. We can not keep saved on less faith and devotion than it

took to find salvation. We can not know the abiding presence of Christ on a lower level of consecration and trust than was necessary to bring Him to enthronement in the soul.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." What a message of hope! What a pledge of victory and triumph across all our days! His indwelling is the secret of inward purity. If we would know what it means to be pure and clean day by day, we must not only experience an inward renovation but know an inward possession as well The heart must not only be cleansed; it must be indwelt.

In one of the most difficult parables Jesus ever spoke He told of how an unclean spirit going out of a man went into the dry places seeking rest but found none. He returned at last to his own house and found it empty, swept and garnished. Then he took with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and entered into the heart home of that man and dwelt there. The pronouncement of the Christ was. "The last state of that man is worse than the first." Whatever may be the full content of the Master's teaching in this difficult passage, it suggests that the heart must have protection from God if it is to be kept clean and pure. Pressure from the outside demands protection on the inside.

If a field is to be really useful it must not only be cultivated against noxious weeds but must be sown to useful grain. Charles H. Spurgeon, speaking on a theme kindred to the one we are interested in, used to tell of a flower of great renown. A man had a garden that grew only weeds. He took some seed of this famous flower and sowed them in the garden and went his way, leaving the garden to itself. After a time he returned and found that the flower had filled every nook and corner of the garden. Wherever he turned he caught its sweet perfume. Christ is that flower of renown. He will uproot and cast out all sin within and He will fill the heart with the beauty and fragrance of His own presence.

Christ within is the pledge of peace. To enthrone Christ within does not mean that no storms will come. His presence offers peace in the midst of the storms and despite the storms.

Some years ago the southern section in which I lived was visited by a very destructive cyclone. A few months later I traveled up and down a part of that mountainous region and found that many people had digged storm cellars. These cellars did not, they could not, prevent the coming of the storms. They do offer a place of safety and refuge when the storms break in fury and madness.

Jesus Christ living in the heart does not prevent the storms of temptation and testing from coming. He does keep quiet and calm within while there is tempest and fury on the outside. He calms the tempest of the heart. He can hush the clamorous call of unholy desire and sinful longing. He will keep that soul in peace whose mind is stayed on Him.

Christ within is the secret of present, constant victory. We do not live by the strength of yesterday's supply of grace. We do not conquer by the memory of past glorious achievements. No experience within the reach of faith this hour will seal the soul to victory in the battle that shall be ours in coming days; but we may have a Savior living within who gives victory now and who will live in the heart, making it victorious for all the tomorrows.

A German Catholic making ready to cross the sea to our own country was presented with a crucifix as a factor of safety in the presence of the dangers of the sea. She proved its virtue by accomplishing a safe voyage. When she had established her home in America she placed the crucifix on the mantel where it might be in plain view and readily available when need arose. Accidentally during the work of a day the crucifix was jarred from the mantel, fell to the floor and broke in pieces. The woman went into hysteria and cried "What shall I do?"

That gave a neighbor woman her chance to witness. She

told her friend of the Christ who was but faintly, and oh, so imperfectly symbolized by the crucifix, whose power was not in lighted candles and veiled symbols and ghostly show but in a living presence. She assured her further that this Christ would come into her heart; that His presence could not be dispelled by the accidents nor the incidents of day by day toil and that His coming would mean the safety and victory for which her heart so deeply longed.

My good friend, Mr. Charles G. Trumbull, of the Sunday School Times, told in our presence an interesting story of a little girl who had learned the secret of constant heart peace and victory through Jesus Christ. She was approached one day by a friend who requested that she make known the secret of her quiet confidence and triumph. She replied by saying that Jesus Christ lived in her heart. She said that when the Tempter came to the door of her soul and knocked, she said to the indwelling Lord, "Jesus, will you please answer the knock at the door." She said that Jesus would then go to the door and open it, and when the enemy saw Him, he would turn away saying, "I beg your pardon; the wrong number." That is a child's way of expressing the secret of victory. It is an easy way, and gets at the very heart of the matter. Christ within is the soul's protection, the defense of the life.

The text assures us that Christ within is the hope of glory. Blessed and fruitful are the secrets of His presence now. Rich is the life that makes room for Him. Content and secure the heart that has furnished Him a home. But his presence and fullness make the future glorious in its promise. He who makes the heart His home here will bring the heart to the many mansioned city yonder. He who gives to the heart the quiet of a divine peace now will lift the heart to the home of peace after a while. He who makes us by His grace to be kings and priests unto our God will bring us to spiritual dominion in the heavenlies and ordain us to unfailing service at His altars in the sky. The Christ who by His coming and by His

indwelling brings heaven down to man will, by His grace and power, lift man up to heaven.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

The Eternal Purpose of God

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

Acording to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Eph. 3:11.

The epistle to the Ephesians has been called the highest mountain peak of New Testament revelation. It has been spoken of as the "Alps" of the New Testamnt and as the "Epistle of the altitudes." Surely no one can walk about it and gaze thoughtfully upon it without concluding that it is indeed a high mountain of truth and revelation. Even the foothills of truth found here are lofty. We do well to reverently ask the Spirit to guide us into these altitudes.

Early in the epistle there begins a chain of thought that runs through to its close. In the third and fourth verses of the first chapter, the apostle ascribes praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." In the ninth verse of the same chapter we read of "the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." Our text supports the same thought with the words we have quoted: "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." There is a thought of God, a choice, a purpose of God about which gather all the truths of this profoundly spiritual epistle.

I.

Our God is a God of purpose. We have neither the time nor the inclination to discuss the positions of the materialistic philosopher that our universe and the human race are the results of the operation of impersonal forces. There is a sufficient First Cause for every effect. Things do not just happen to be. The divine procedure is not in hap-hazard fashion. God's program in the world was

first a plan. The universe, our own world and the world of men about us are not accidental. The physical universe evidences not only design in creation but purpose in continuation. Back of it all we discover the thought and plan of Him who was "in the beginning." We may well be possessed of a becoming modesty when we discuss creation. There are calendar matters we do not know. There are processes and methods with which, at most, we have but a very partial acquaintance. But we find no real rest for mind or heart till we get back to the sublime postulate with which the Scriptures begin: "In the beginning God created." Back of creation a Creator: back of human living and life the will and purpose of a personal God.

Having created the material universe, we may well infer His interest and care for it. The heavens are the works of His hands and do manifest His glory; but the heavenly bodies also take the paths of His choosing. He guides them with His eye.

We remember when Halley's comet was making its appearance some years ago, some of the astronomers on whom we depended for advance information prophesied that the comet would appear at a certain time traveling in a stated direction. It appeared on time but going in the very opposite direction from that which the astronomers had anticipated. The news prints have told us in the very recent past of the same sort of behavior on the part of a comet. We are thus reminded of man's limitations and liability to mistake even in a field where his calculations are usually accurate. God chooses the orbit of fixed star and blazing sun and wheeling planet. He knows the destiny of those erratic and eccentric nebulous bodies which we call comets. They do not escape His watchful eye, just as His children do not drift beyond His love and care. He who sees the sparrow's fall keeps a watchful eye over the whole majestic field of the universe.

Human life is under the discipline of the divine purpose. There is a growing perplexity and complexity in human relationships. The strain of seeming conflicting interests, the clash of class and race differences, the bias and alien tendencies of unregenerate human nature are facts we must face. Our modern day seems to have brought an incrased manifestation of these things. The conditions of our living have become more complicated. If any one fact rises up as paramount in our day it is that the peoples of the earth are face to face with each other. Neither continents nor seas give much sense of isolation now. The major problems of humanity must be met on the basis of their international and world significance. They are too great for solution by unassisted human nature. Their solution requires the wisdom, love and resources of grace belonging to God. Some of us who are neither melancholy nor pessimistic would be driven to despair did we not believe in a superintending purpose and providence of God.

The individual is not overlooked in the breadth of a purpose which embraces all mankind. That is one of the emphatic things in the teachings of Jesus. He makes prominent the interest of the woman that sought the *one* lost piece of money. He dwells tenderly on the compassion of the good shepherd who left "ninety and nine sheep safe in the fold" and went out to seek the *one* lost sheep. It is so today. His love is particularized and individualized. He sees the mother as she bends over the crib of the sick child. He beholds the orphan with the mystery and burden and desolation of His losses pressing upon Him. He counts the tears of the grief stricken. He is present in the wilderness of man's temptation and in the high mountain of vision and contemplation where the world's appeal assaults the soul. He knows by communion of experience the problems of the personal life. He is one with us in the struggles of the soul. He holds all life under providential control and gives to us across the ages

the assuring message that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called acording to His purpose."

II.

The purpose of God concerning man is eternal. We make plans and change them. We announce programs and then revise and accomodate them. It is wise to do so. We are not ignoring the sources of spiritual illumination when we say that much we do is in nature experimental. We get information by test and experiment. The most satisfying and assuring spiritual rvelations come by way of experience. We will to do His will and are thus assured in our own heart experiences that the doctrine is of God. It is not thus with the Lord. He both proposes and proceeds in harmony with the dictates of infinite wisdom and with the assurance belonging to infinite resources.

Teologians have talked to us about God's "ideal plan" and His "modified plan" of dealing with the race of men. If I have grasped their thought, they mean by the "ideal plan" of God the plan He should have worked by had man never sinned: the method of the divine procedure, were He dealing with a race that had never known evil. By the "modified plan" of God they mean the plan God does work by since man has sinned.

We are not prepared to discuss what may have been the "ideal plan" of God as men have inferred it. We are ready to say on the authority of God's word that the deflection and fall of the race did not find God without a remedy. It was a great adventure of deity when the Lord endowed man with the capacity of choice. He then took his place in the universe as a personal factor. There may have been a time in the dateless past when humanity was not an immediate influence in the plans of God. There has never been a time when the program of divine action has not finally been made contingent upon conserving the interests and welfare of the human race. God not only

knew that man possessed the ability for choosing but foreknew that in the exercise of that power he would take the wrong path. Redemption was not an after thought; it was a forethought. Calvary was not an incidental provision to meet an emergency, it was a providential provision to meet an anticipated need.

Engineers tell us that they build into railway bridges what they are pleased to call a "factor of safety." It is described as a capacity to bear up under several times the weight of the loads which are supposed to pass in transit over them. "A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" is the factor of safety an infinitely concerned God placed back of our race when He gave to man his being and clothed him with the regal responsibility of choosing for himself..

We are thus able to see that God's thought lays hold on eternity. Before the winds sighed or the sun shone; before the devil tempted and man sinned; when humanity was a prospect in the thought and love of God He purposed that there should be in this world of ours a race created in the image of God, redeemed and purified by the blood of His Son and serving Him in the devotion of a perfect, an undivided love. That purpose has not and shall not fail of fulfillment.

III.

God's purpose concerning man is consummated in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our expectations are from Him; our riches are in Him. He becomes at once the hope and desire of the race.

That is the meaning of Old Testament prophecy. Prophet after prophet and seer after seer looked down the dim vista of coming ages and foretold a future Deliverer. Humble in birth, lowly in life, despised and rejected of men, coming unto Zion as her King in humility, sublime in death, triumphant in His resurrection, mighty to save and strong to deliver, Jesus fulfills every prophetic promise

and expectation. He could say of His own Person and ministry, "I came not to destroy the law and the prophets: I came to fulfill." The bed of prophecy has been running full since Jesus came. The open doors of the world, the aroused desire of peoples, the unrest and expectancy of nations are but evidences that the redemptive purpose in Jesus, prophetically announced, is having fruition among men everywhere.

That is the significance of the advent anthem. The angel that announced the birth of Jesus to wondering shepherds declared: "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord." A multitude of the heavenly host dropped from the choir loft of the skies the enchanting music of coming peace and good will through a "Child born, a Son given." That Babe in Bethelehem's manger was the Builder of the universe. That Infant in the arms of Mary is the source and inspiration of the world's wisdom. He alone can lead the race out of its confusion and sin to light and salvation.

It is that truth which speaks to us out of the temple visit Jesus made when twelve years of age. There He both asked questions and answered questions to the astonishment of His hearers. The eminent divines of that day could not understand how one so young in years could possess wisdom so great. We fear that some of the divines in our own day have concluded that Jesus lived too early in the world's history to be for man a final authority.

If He cannot and does not answer man's most perplexing questions, they shall go unanswered. What of our origin? Neither science nor philosophy can give final answer to that question. What of our present possibilities? Only Jesus can redeem and enfranchise life and bring it to its highest and best. What of our destiny? Jesus alone can speak any authoritative word on life after death. It is He who brings "life and immortality to light through the gospel."

The purpose of God revealed in Jesus is given illustration on the banks of the Jordan. It was at the Jordan that Jesus received baptism from John. Spiritual significance takes precedence over ceremony and ordinance in that great epoch. Brief are the words which declare the physical fact. No words can make known all the wealth of spiritual meaning belonging to that occurrence. The Father spoke out of the more excellent glory, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove. The announcement of John the Baptist had been: "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

It was in that last promise that hope of gracious assistance lay. "He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire." That was the great spiritual fact of which the ordinance was but symbolic. If the time should ever come when Jesus ceases to baptize with the Holy Ghost, we may invite men to our baptismal fonts or lure them to running streams, yet they shall know no inward renewal. The only purifying, empowering, investing baptism the soul may know is the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. And only Jesus can administer that.

The same truth finds utterance in the tragedy on Golgotha's hill. There the High Priesthood of Jesus found its complete fulfillment in the offering our Lord made of Himself for the sins of the world. The infinite price was paid. The corn of wheat fell into the ground to die in order that it might not abide alone. The flesh of the Son of Man was given for the life of the world. Men were redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus. The Son of God took on Him the iniquities of all men and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. He made His soul an offering for sin. It was at the cross that the Lord saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.

We are told betimes that the incarnation is the greatest Christian fact. That is a reasonable conclusion, if we think of the incarnation as having made possible sacrificial redemption. On the other hand, it is true that Jesus took upon Himself our likeness, not only that He might be sympathetic and merciful, but also that He might be a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. The cross becomes central to all that Jesus purposed or performed on behalf of man.

I remember when I was yet in my father's home to have read a criticism of Cowper's hymn, "There is a Fountain filled with blood." The critic of the old hymn said we had gotten away from a religion of the "Shambles" and from a "Slaughter House Emphasis." He said we were coming to see that the winning elements in the gospel were those that had to do with the wonderful example of Jesus and with the ethical content of His teaching.

It may readily be admitted that our statements of the great fact of redemption have often been crude enough. That is not to be wondered at. The profound truths of the Christian faith do not easily yield themselves to the embrace of mere terms. But the great fact itself shall never lose its significance. One might approach a soul that is "down and out" or "up and out" (upper slumdom is as corrupt and needy as lower slumdom) and talk of the beautiful truths Jesus taught and the perfect example which He set. Such a soul would answer: "I have known a great deal more truth than I have practiced and I have seen many better examples than I have copied." What such soul is a Savior to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. Jesus becomes just that to every willing soul.

We take our place under the banner of the cross. The generations shall not outgrow the necessity for "a part in the deed on Calvary." And, so long as men sin and fail and fall, so long as guilt is a weary load and in-

ward lack of conformity to the will of God a haunting reality, just so long will the multitudes lift their song of hope:

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's Veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

The purpose of God in Christ Jesus our Lord had an accent of triumph at the open tomb. There was a time when the hope of the race was locked in the embrace of one tomb. Had the grave held Jesus, it would hold us too. If death had mastered Him, it would also vanquish us. If our Lord had not arisen victor over the grave, then should we have had no answer to the ancient question: "If a man die shall he live again?" But He arose. He is alive forever more and has the keys of death and the grave. We, too, shall come forth from the grave. Because He lives, we shall live. In His triumph, we have the sure prophecy of our final triumph over the grave. In the light of the glorious Resurrection morning, we read: "He that believeth on me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and he that believth in me shall never die."

There is something majestic about the way in which Sampson permitted himself to be chained to the gates of Gaza by his Philistine foes. They, no doubt, went to their homes to mature a plan for his complete humiliation on the morrow. They said: "We have him in our hands, now. We will mock him in the presence of his foes and before the multitude of the people tomorrow." But, invsted with a strength which God alone could give, while they feverishly and fitfully slept, he lifted the gates of Gaza off their hinges and bore them away in majestic triumph.

It was just so with Jesus. He gave Himself to the embrace of death. He was chained to the gates of the grave. His foes gloated over His seeming dismal failure and tragic death. There came a third morning. Jesus

Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, lifted the gates of death from their hinges, and in triumph decisive, majestic and eternal, He walked out of the tomb and to universal spiritual conquest. The puropses of God in Christ Jesus are revealed at the open grave.

IV.

The purpose of God, for men, is inclusive. We mean to say that it touches with benevolent concern every son and daughter of the race. God not only delights in His family on earth but thinks and plans in love for every child of the household.

It is not difficult to believe that God has had a purpose for some men who have lived. He had a purpose concerning Abraham. Called from Ur of the Chaldees, he was sent out into a country which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance. God gave promises to him; he believed them. He made demands upon him: Abraham obeyed them. He dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promises. He qualified as a friend of God, both tested and proven, when in answer to the Divine command, he placed his only son, Isaac, on the altar and made ready to give him in sacrifice unto God. A substitute was provided, foreshadowing the substitutionary offering of Jesus Himself for man: but in the heart of the old Hebrew Patriarch, the sacrifice of Isaac had been genuinely and fully made. After such a test, he became the confidante of Jehovah and the father of faithful peoples. God had a purpose concerning him.

God had a purpose concerning Moses. He was born of a Jewish mother, cradled in an ark of bullrushes upon the placid bosom of the River Shihor, and brought up at Pharaoh's court in the atmosphere, and possessing the privileges, belonging to royalty. When he had come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to suffer the afflictions of Christ rather than to inherit the riches of Egypt. Graduated at the university of

Egypt, he was given a post-graduate course in the wilderness, where he kept watch over his father-in-law's sheep. God spoke to him by the voices of nature and built into him the strength of the granite hills among which he lived. He then gave him a vision of Himself in the bush that flamed and was not consumed, and sent him back to behold the torn lambs of Israel's flock. Meekest of men, law-giver of the ages, leader of an enslaved people out of bondage into a national inheritance, surely God had a purpose concerning him.

God had a purpose concerning Saul of Tarsus. A Jew by birth. A Roman citizen by inheritance. Brought up at the feet of the scholarly Gamaliel, brought to repentance and contrition at the feet of the Man of Galilee, brought out a preacher of an uttermost salvation from the house of Judas and the street called Straight. He became the messenger of a gospel universalism, the apostle to the Gentiles, New Testament theologian, chiefest of men, most patient of sufferers, greatest of apostles, a crowned spiritual warrior. It must be that the purpose of God made Paul "a chosen vessel."

The mother of John Wesley always believed that he was providentially delivered from the flames when five years of age. He was brought up in a strict religious atmosphere. From great and good parents, he received an unusual family heritage. Going out from his father's home to further training in Oxford University, he became a member of the despised Holy Club. He knew more about the poor than he did about society's elite. He was busier in alleviating human suffering and need than in seeking athletic prowess. Having had his heart strangely warmed in Alders Gate Street in London, he went out to preach a salvation universal as human need and full as human longing. He became an outcast from the church of his father, took his father's tomb for a pulpit, the world for his parish, saved England from such a revolution as devastated France, and released to the needy mul-

titudes of both the Old World and the New a proclamation of salvation full, free and consciously experienced. The sons of Wesley in all lands, under all flags, among all people, lifting the anthem of salvation and offering grace that covers all our sin, is evidence sufficient that God had a purpose concerning John Wesley.

It is just as true of men and women with ordinary talents. God gives to them a place and mission no other could know. That dignifies life. It redeems the career of the man with one talent from aimlessness, and fits every life into a plan thought out by God Himself.

We are encouraged when we remember that God knows our gifts, our temperaments and the fields where we may most effectively serve. We were impressed as we listened to a young man, a Senior in College, recently, who spoke from the text, "The field is the world." He dwelt upon the idea of the Christian man and woman as being seed of the Divine planting, and stressed, to the comfort of all who listened, the thought that He who made the world knew just the soil in which every life might find its largest productiveness. That is the truth coming to us out of the reflections our theme inspires. The life of every man has been planned by God. The field of every man has been chosen by God, and the permanent success of every man is guaranteed who is willing to take the way of the Lord.

V.

The purpose of God is intensive. We mean to say that He longs to bring every individual soul to its highest and best in spiritual attainment. Grace has been provided for all men, but all needed grace has been abundantly provided for every man.

We are convinced that if the will of God were wrought out in every life unhindered, all the powers and faculties of mind and heart would be given their largest field for development. The way of safety for men does not lie either in a mental infancy or a spiritual mediocrity. There

is no danger that men shall know too much. There is danger that they shall think they know too much. There is no peril in men possessing truth. There is peril in that some shall think they possess truth when their positions are only partially true, or altogether false. There is no danger that men shall have too much religion. There is danger that they shall become Pharisaic and consider themselves special favorites of God, and refuse to share the blessings so bountifully bestowed.

God intensively purposes the spiritual awakening of the spiritually dead. The author of our text brings us to what we may very well call the cemetery of the spiritually dead in Ephesus. There is no life there. There are no trees with foliage, no springing fountains, no flowers blooming, no birds singing. Death reigns everywhere. Through the gate of that cemetery we are directed to family lots where, stooping, we read such epitaphs as these: "Children of wrath;" "Children of disobedience;" "Dead in sins;" "Aliens from the common-wealth of Israel;" "Strangers from the covenants of promise;" "Having no hope;" "Without God in the world." There could be no more graphic description of that deadness which results from trespasses and sins. Nowhere could be found a more hopeless portrayal of a race in its spiritual helplessness.

Christ Jesus, the Lord, comes to the rescue. The apostle who worded the helplessness and hopelessness of the people of Ephesus becomes the prophet and messenger of a new day. Listen to him as he words the intensive purpose of God: "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." A Divine visitation has been made to the cemetery of the spiritually dead. Life forces have been released. Fountains are sparkling. Birds are singing. Flowers are blooming. There is life everywhere. Even the graves of the spiritually dead are burst, and men are lifted up into newness of life and go forth to illustrate a power as marvelous in the realm of the spiritual as the raising of Lazarus from the grave had been in the realm of the physical.

God intensively purposes the spiritual purification of his church. That truth is made emphatic in the epistle from which the text has been taken.

We see it in the ministry of sacrifice. In the 5th chapter of the epistle, the 25th, 26th and 27th verses, we read: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." One of the wealthiest figures having to do with the relation of the church to her Lord is found here. Christ is the Bride-groom; the church is His bride. Upon her he pours the treasure of a divine love and interest. He would make her fair as the morning, clear as the sun, and in her spiritual warfare, terrible as an army with banners. He would present her before the presence of the Father's glory without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

There are husbands who read these pages. There is not one, I am sure, who would be willing for his wife to go among her friends without becoming apparel. We are not speaking now of the dictates of mere fashion; but every real husband wants that his wife shall come into the fellowship of her friends and his with garments that are clean and which adorn her as the pure, devoted woman that she is.

Christ takes the same attitude toward His church. He wants that she shall be pure. He purposes that the bloom of health shall be upon her cheek. The wrinkles spoken of here are not the wrinkles that are ironed out by a flat-iron at an ironing board. They are wrinkles which age and spiritual decrepitude bring to the face of the bride of Christ. It is these He would remove by the fulness of life, by that renewal of spiritual youth which results from waiting patiently upon the Lord. In order

that she may be pure, holy, strong and beautiful, He gives Himself to the ministry of sacrifice. Marvelous the love which He has for His church! Gracious His self-giving on behalf of the church! Glorious the results of His purpose concerning the church when she stands holy, and without blame before Him in love in the presence of God and assembled throngs!

The same purpose finds revelation in the ordaining of ministries. We read: "And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Just as the spokes of the wheel point toward the hub, so do all the ministries of the various called and equipped messengers of God center in the divine purpose to make perfect the saints, preparing them to take their place in the body of Christ and making them ready to grow up in Christ in all things who is the Head of the church.

The intensive purpose of God breathes itself out in divinely inspired petition. With the exception of the High Priestly prayer of Jesus recorded in the 17th chapter of John, there is perhaps no more profound petition in all the Word of God than that found in Ephesians 3:14-21. There are depths here no man can sound; there are spiritual heights no man can scale. There are possibilities made available so profound in meaning as that they move the soul to speechless wonder. There is spiritual wealth here sufficient to make every child of God rich for time and eternity, unless faith should waver in the presence of such possibilities. The apostle climaxes the prayer with the wonderful petition: "Now, unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

Behold, how these revelations discover to us the intensive purpose of God. Burning in the heart of Christ like a fire is the desire that His people should be free from sin, made in heart and character like unto their glorious Lord and prepared to serve Him in the place of His choosing with a loyalty undivided and a devotion that is ardent.

VI.

The purpose of God is militant. He calls to spiritual conflict. At the very doorway of discipleship is the demand that we take upon ourselves self-denial and sacrifice. The apostle follows the lead of our Lord and Master in declaring to us that the world is not a friend of grace to help us on to God. There are spiritual foes. There are organized forces of evil. There are principalities and powers in the heavenlies which dispute the soul's progress and imperil the soul's destiny. We must fight if we would win.

It is just as true that there are spiritual accomplishments which wait upon faith and daring. There are crusades to be preached. There are evils to be smitten. There are epochs to be ushered in. There are nations to be evangelized. There are multitudes who wait for the church to lift her witness to the Christ who redeems all life and fills every channel of our living to overflowing. There is no discharge from this warfare. There is no escape from the responsibilities of Christian soldiery.

The Gospel makes appeal to the most heroic elements in the character of men and women. It calls to the hard task; demands the complete sacrifice; but pledges an eternal reward. We are impressed that the church has sometimes lost her effectiveness in appealing to young people by an effort to make the Gospel way a primrose path. Young life is ready for adventure. The call of the heroic Christ finds ready response in the hearts of multitudes.

In one of the schools of the South, a story was told of how a young medical missionary, an alumnus of that institution, had gone out to the interior of China. After much toil and sacrifice, he had established himself in the confidence of the people, and was just getting ready for what promised to be a fruitful missionary career when he was taken with a fatal Eastern disease and passed to his reward. The man who told the story said to the group of students who sat before him: "I thought it possible that some of you might like to take his place. It will mean the self-denial through which he passed. It will mean the same spirit of self-sacrifice in which he labored. It may mean the same sort of death which he died. Are there those who will respond?" Immediately six young men leaped to their feet, offering themselves for a task noble, difficult, challenging, sacrificial.

They say it did not happen, that story given such wide currency concerning the brief speech of General Pershing, at the tomb of La Fayette. Some things do not have to happen to be true. But the story given us in those days was to the effect that representatives of other nations had made eloquent addresses commemorating the devotion and bravery of the great Frenchman. America's representative was asked to speak. General John J. Pershing, the soldier, stood at attention and said, "La Fayette, we are here. Here with our love of liberty, here with our heritage of freedom, here with our wealth of treasure and manhood, here with our purpose to see it through until it is over over here." That would have been the significance of such an utterance had it been made.

I wish we could find some mountain top of spiritual vision, for I would not tarry at the tomb of the Christ. On such a mount, I would that the young life of our day might, with faces lifted toward the light, say to the Man of Galilee: "Jesus, we are here: here with our capacities, here in the fulness of heart consecration, here in the simplicity of a great faith, here in the eagerness which youth

inspires, here to answer any call Christ gives. We offer ourselves for the place of His choosing, for any work He wants us to do; to go, to be, to suffer what the purpose of God may determine for us." If the young people of even one community would answer the call of God in a fashion like that, the state would know it, the nation would hear about it, and the world itself would feel the impact which lives thus given to God would make upon a race in its need.

Someone has said that if a young man wants to live forever, let him pledge himself in loyalty to some true, worthy, but unpopular cause and his immortality is guaranteed. The unbelief of the day, the materialism so wide-spread, the spiritual indifference which has come upon men like a palsy, make the plea for a vital spirituality to sound like an alien emphasis in our day. To support such standards is the most heroic call that can reach the ears of young men and women. It is to them that we appeal. Give up worldliness, flee indifference, take the way with Christ, and time and eternity are yours.

VII.

The purpose of God is remunerative. We are not fighting a losing battle. Already bulletins have been issued which forecast the results of the conflict which has been raging between right and wrong across all the centuries.

There is remuneration now. Dipping into the Ephesian epistle again, we get the apostle's conception of the dignity and honor belonging to the household of faith. He says: "We are fellow citizens of the saints." We think of the history of the past, of Moses the meek, Abraham the faithful, Enoch the devout, Jacob the rugged, Isaiah the seraphic, Jeremiah the tender hearted, Paul the many sided, Luther the fearless, Wesley the ardent, Katharine Booth the queenly. What a citizenry! How priceless the privilege of relationship to them. There is no fraternity in all the world comparable to the fraternity of the blood-washed.

But the vision widens. We are not simply fellow citizens of the saints. We are children of the King, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ. Nay, more, through the enfranchisement of Grace, we ourselves are made kings and priests in the Kingdom and service of our Lord. Some men have envisioned the day toward which the whole creation moves as the time when democracy shall be universal and every man shall have the heritage of freedom. We would lift a prospect more splendid. It is that, through the grace of God, every soul may not only know freedom and liberty from sin and its dominion but may be lifted to kingship or queenship.

But, note that we are not only fellow citizens of the saints, and children of the King, we are heirs to the heavenly estate. What that means we do not know. For the most part, the people of God have not been the rich and the great according to the estimates of men. Sainthood is often developed in a cottage, and character, white and regal, has been built where poverty dwelt.

We were holding meetings some years ago in one of our American cities. Some friends took us to one of the great department stores of the city. Among other things we were shown a miniature millionaire's mansion. There were rooms in it the names of which we found it difficult to remember. There were the Elizabethan rooms, Sheraton rooms, the day nursery, the night nursery and other equipment we did not know was necessary. Some of the furnishings had uses about which we knew nothing, and concerning which our intelligence was so limited as that we did not know how to ask questions. We passed out of that miniature mansion saying: we do not possess one; we do not need one. But we have read in the Old Book the promise of Him who is both Redeemer and Lord: "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself."

What that place is like may be determined, we are told, by the length of time He has taken to prepare it. But briefly are we given information concerning it. We are told that its streets are of gold, its walls are of jasper, its gates are of pearl, the Lamb is its light, holiness is its atmosphere, peace is its law, its music is made up of the song of Moses and the Lamb, the anthems which the church of the first-born sing and the doxologies of the assembled peoples that sound like the crashing waves of the sea. Only figures, the school men tell us. Then, what must the fact be? What are the realities back of this holy symbolry? What are the glories which shall break on the enraptured vision of those who have walked with God in white in the midst of a world's adversities?

Life to many of us is sweet. We do not complain of its burdens. We rejoice in the opportunities which are given us to assist in making a better world. But there steals into our hearts betimes a holy curiosity to know what is just inside the vale. We wait for the dawning of that great day as tempest-tossed mariners wait for the gray dawn of morning. We press on toward that day as pilgrims press their way toward home. We believe in all the promises which belong to the consummation of such a day, as children believe in the promises of parents who have gone away for a time, but whose coming again assures them of rich tokens of reward. And all of this rich prospect is to become ours, "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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